TALES OF VOODOO

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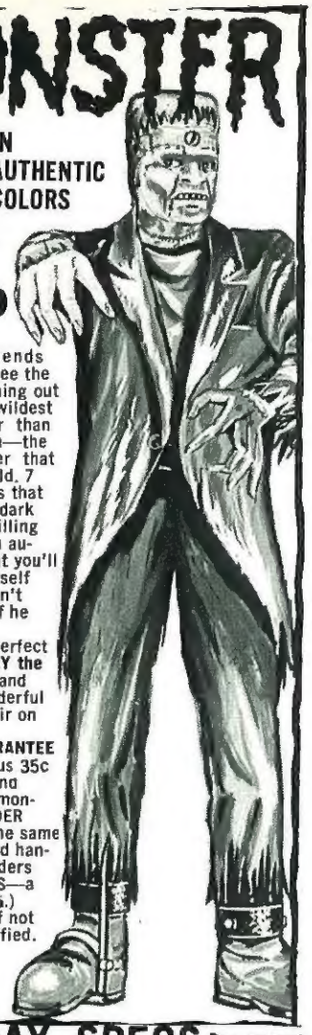
STEP INTO THE SCARIFYING WORLD OF BIZARRE MONSTERS, VAMPIRES AND GHOULS PLUS OTHER BONE-CHILLING TALES

MONSTER



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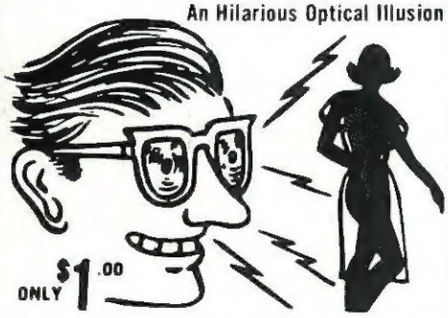

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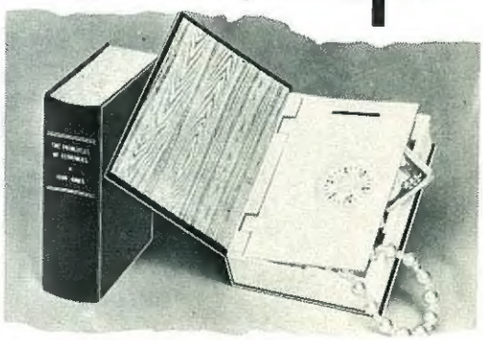

The Secret Book Safe looks just like any book so no one would think to look for valuables in it. But even chance discovery leaves your possessions safe — securely locked by a combination only YOU know — because YOU yourself have set it. Simple instructions show you how. Tough under structure is covered with simulated leather binding to look just like a real book. Just send $1.00 plus 35c postage and handling for each book safe you want. Money back if you are not satisfied.

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50 22 CAL. PELLETS FREE
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Lynbrook, N. Y. 11563 Not sold in NY City.

TALES OF VOODOO

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It lurks in the black depths of night, waiting with slimy claws for a victim to fill the empty coffin. So, who goes out after dark? Hmm?

CARL BURGOS, Editor IRVING FASS, Art Director
EZRA JACKSON, Art Editor

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SATAN'S HORROR

ALDO VON CARL THOUGHT HE COULD OUTSMART THE DEVIL... BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW THE HORRIBLE PENALTY IF HE WAS CAUGHT WHILE TRYING TO...

PLEASE, SATAN...PLEASE ...RELEASE ME FROM THE BARGAIN I MADE!

WHAT? WHEN I GIVE MY WORD, I KEEP IT! YOU HAVE WHAT YOU ASKED FOR... SO WHY COMPLAIN?

OSCAR FRAGA

MANY YEARS AGO, ALDO VON CARL, A YOUNG PEASANT, LOVED A BEWITCHING LASS NAMED ELFREDA.

MARRY ME, ELFREDA?

DON'T BE SILLY, ALDO! WHY MARRY YOU WHEN THE DUKE'S YOUNG SON CAN'T LIVE UNLESS HE SEES ME EVERY DAY?

AS TIME PASSED, ALDO'S LOVE OF ELFREDA AND HATE OF THE DUKE BECAME ONE...

STOP STARING, SERF! YOUR UGLY FACE FRIGHTENS MY HORSES!

ONE OF THESE DAYS I'LL FRIGHTEN *YOU* TO DEATH!

...THE YOUNG DUKE SOON TIRED OF ELFREDA, AND FILLED *HER* HEART WITH THE BREW OF HATE!

KILL HIM, ALDO! KILL HIM, AND I'LL BECOME YOUR BRIDE! I PROMISE!

IF I KILL THE YOUNG DUKE... PUNISHMENT WOULD BE SWIFT. YET, THERE'S A WAY ... SHE'S WORTH IT!
YES, ALDO... I'LL KEEP MY WORD!
IT'S A BARGAIN, ELFREDA... AND REMEMBER... YOU KEEP YOUR WORD.
THAT NIGHT, ALDO SET OUT TO MAKE ANOTHER BARGAIN... AND HIS WAY LED TO THE HUT OF MOTHER GEBLUDE A KNOWN WITCH!
GOOD EVEN DAME GEBLUDE! SUMMON YOUR MASTER! I WOULD MAKE A BARGAIN WITH HIM!
REMEMBER... A BARGAIN WITH MY MASTER WILL COST YOU YOUR SOUL!
I KNOW! BUT HE'LL WAIT A LONG TIME FOR MY SOUL! DID YOU EVER THINK THAT THERE ARE MEN WHO ARE SMARTER THAN THE DEVIL!
MAYBE THERE ARE ...BUT I'VE YET TO SEE ONE.
BLOOD OF LIVING FAT OF DEAD, EYES FROM THE SCREECHING OWLS HEAD, CRAWLING SERPENTS FROM OOZING MIRE... COME MY MASTER ...THROUGH WATER AND FIRE!
YOU WHO HAVE SUMMONED ME... I WILL GRANT ANY FAVOR YOU ASK PROVIDED YOUR SOUL IS MINE AFTER YOU DIE. AGREED?
I AGREE... AND MY FAVOR IS A SIMPLE ONE... I ASK TO LIVE FOREVER!
YOU CAN HAVE MY SOUL AFTER I DIE... BUT I'LL NEVER DIE! A GOOD BARGAIN, EH, MASTER DEVIL!
A GOOD BARGAIN... BUT YOU'LL SPEND ALL ETERNITY REGRETTING IT! FOOL, YOU HAVE GAINED NOTHING...

FOR ELFREDA AND ME, YOU HIGH BORN FOOL!
HE...HE'S KILLING THE YOUNG DUKE! HE MUST BE MAD!

YOU WON'T HAVE TO WAIT LONG FOR VENGEANCE!
IS FOREVER LONG?

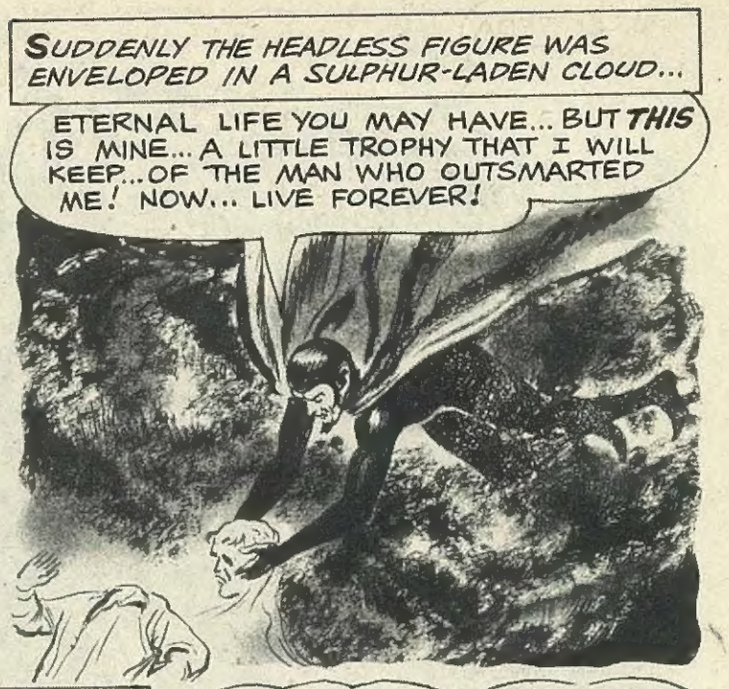
YOUR SWORDS CAN'T HURT ME! NOTHING CAN HURT ME! I'LL NEVER DIE... NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO!
AFTER HIM!

ALDO WAS CAPTURED BY THE GUARDS, AND SENTENCED TO BE BEHEADED BUT HE LAUGHED AT THE SENTENCE...
YOUR SWORD CAN'T HARM ME!

THE PONDEROUS BLOW FELL AND ALDO'S HEAD TUMBLED TO THE GROUND! AND YET...
THERE'S NO BLOOD ...NO BLOOD!
AND LOOK THE WOUND... IT...IT'S HEALED OVER!

ALDO'S TRUNCATED BODY REACHED GRUESOMELY FOR THE FALLEN HEAD, AND...
ELFREDA! REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE!
AAAAHH!

ELFREDA! YOU... MUST... BE... MY... BRIDE!
AAG-GHH!


SUDDENLY THE HEADLESS FIGURE WAS ENVELOPED IN A SULPHUR-LADEN CLOUD...
ETERNAL LIFE YOU MAY HAVE... BUT THIS IS MINE... A LITTLE TROPHY THAT I WILL KEEP... OF THE MAN WHO OUTSMARTED ME! NOW... LIVE FOREVER!

THE CLOUD LIFTED AND...
HE... HE CAN'T HURT US NOW! QUICK... GET THE ROPES!

AT THE EDGE OF THE TOWN OF BRUNSWOLD IS A DEEP PIT... SOME SAY IT LEAD TO HELL ITSELF!
HE BELONGS TO THE DEVIL... LET THE DEVIL KEEP HIM!
HE'LL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF THE SKY AGAIN!

THERE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE SWORN THEY HAVE SEEN ALDO AGAIN... GROPING... BLINDLY... SEEKING... AND THOUGH NO ONE SLEEPS IN BRUNSWOLD BEHIND UNBARRED DOORS, THERE IS ONE WHO NEVER SLEEPS, FOR SHE REMEMBERS A PROMISE!
The END

THE BLOOD MONSTER

IN THE YEAR 3052 THE ATOMIC WAR WAS BRIEF... AND THE PEACE THAT FOLLOWED HAD SPAWNED A HERITAGE OF HORROR WHICH RAVAGED THE WORLD UNTIL THERE ONLY REMAINED...

THERE HE IS. YOUR... YOUR BROTHER...
IT... IT CAN'T BE IT... IT'S NOT HUMAN!

I ADMIT ITS HARDLY HUMAN. BUT WE MUST STUDY HIS BEHAVIOR. THE RESULTS MAY SAVE THE REST OF HUMANITY.
YES... YES... OF COURSE.

AFTER THAT, OTHER REMAINING HUMANS CHANGED SIMILARLY. SCIENTIC OPINION WAS DIVIDED...
I SAY KILL THEM ALL! THEY'RE DANGEROUS! THEIR MINDS MAY BE AS WARPED AS THEIR BODIES!
WE CAN'T DO THAT. WE MADE THE ATOMIC BOMB AND WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM. LET'S MAKE A PLACE WHERE WE CAN STUDY THEM!

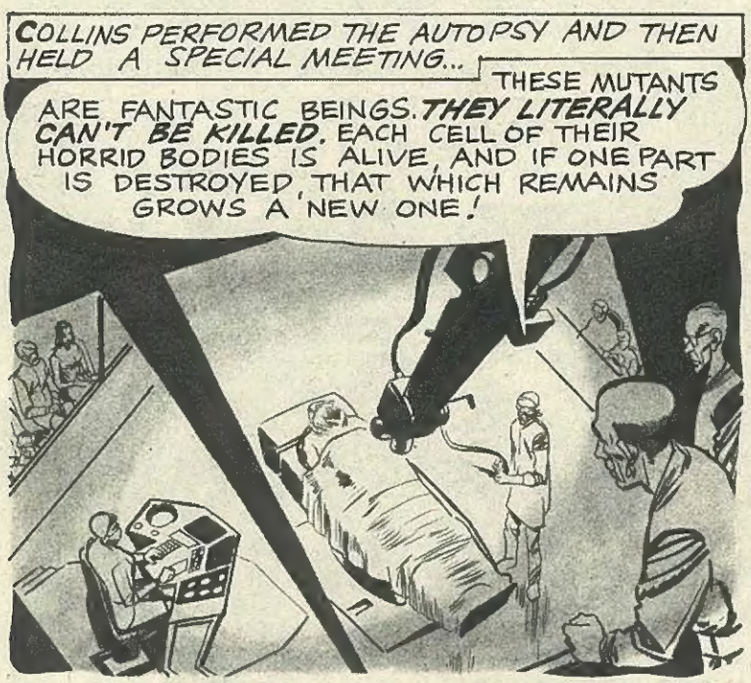
AND SO THEY CREATED THE INSTITUTE FOR OBSERVATION OF MUTANTS... BUT AFTER AWHILE, THOSE WHO WORKED THERE FOUND A BETTER NAME... THE HALL OF HORRORS!
THEY ARE OF LOW INTELLIGENCE, BUT CUNNING!
DOCTOR, WE'RE TEACHING THEM TO READ AND SPEAK.

HUMAN WORDS ISSUING FROM THOSE INHUMAN MOUTHS WAS A GHASTLY MOCKERY!
HUNGRY... I WANT FOOD.
WE OUGHT TO DESTROY THESE INHUMAN LOOKING MONSTERS.

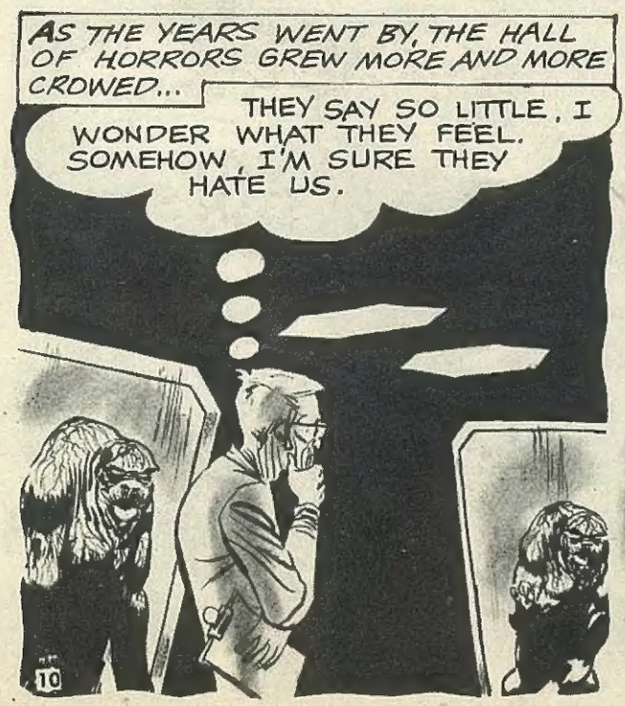
THEN ONE DAY
DOCTOR COLLINS... PLEASE... A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT... COME WITH ME!
CERTAINLY...

WE HAD GIVEN HIM A STICK TO TEST HIS REACTIONS TO IT. HE FELL ON IT...IT'S DRIVEN RIGHT THROUGH ITS HEART.
AN AUTOPSY SHOULD PROVIDE US WITH INTERESTING DATA.

SUDDENLY
DOCTOR, LOOK... IT...IT'S LAUGHING! IT DOESN'T SEEM HURT AT ALL...
AMAZING! BRING IT INTO MY LAB AT ONCE.


COLLINS PERFORMED THE AUTOPSY AND THEN HELD A SPECIAL MEETING...
THESE MUTANTS ARE FANTASTIC BEINGS. THEY LITERALLY CAN'T BE KILLED. EACH CELL OF THEIR HORRID BODIES IS ALIVE, AND IF ONE PART IS DESTROYED, THAT WHICH REMAINS GROWS A NEW ONE!

WITH SURGICAL PRECISION COLLINS AMPUTATED AN ARM...
IT...IT'S GROWING ANOTHER ARM!
YES! EACH PART IS CAPABLE OF REPRODUCING THE REST.


AS THE YEARS WENT BY, THE HALL OF HORRORS GREW MORE AND MORE CROWED...
THEY SAY SO LITTLE, I WONDER WHAT THEY FEEL. SOMEHOW, I'M SURE THEY HATE US.

THE ONE I EXPERIMENTED ON, IT... IT'S BREAKING OUT!

THE ANSWER WAS BRIEF AND HORRIBLY CLEAR!
AARGGH! NO, NO! ARCCHH!
COME... KILL! THEY CANNOT HURT! WE WILL BE FREE...
SOON, THEY POURED FORTH FROM THE BUILDING, A FRENZIED THRONG OF HATE-FILLED CREATURES!
HELP! HELP... THE MONSTERS THEY'RE LOOSE!
THE WORLD BECAME A HUGE, HAUNTED HALL OF HORROR!
I SHOT HIM SIX TIMES, AND HE KEEPS COMING!
NOTHING CAN STOP THEM!

LIKE A HIDEOUS, DEADLY PLAGUE, THEY SPREAD OVER THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH...

FINALLY, THE DAY CAME WHEN A NEW RACE RULED THE EARTH, AND MAN AS HE WAS KNOWN IN THE PAST, DISAPPEARED FOREVER...

AS TIME PASSED, THE HALL OF HORRORS BEGAN TO HOUSE OTHER OCCUPANTS.

WE KILL THEM!

NO. WAIT. THEY WILL CHANGE, AND BE LIKE US.

SEE... THE OTHERS GROW LIKE US, BUT THAT ONE... MOGYLL... HE IS STILL LIKE THE PEOPLE OF THE PAST.

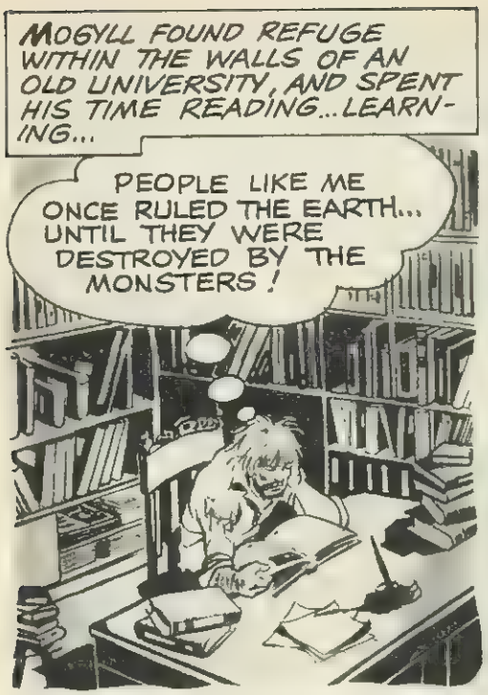
WE LET HIM LIVE TWO MORE YEARS, IF THERE IS NO CHANGE, WE KILL HIM.

MOGYLL REMAINED UNCHANGED.

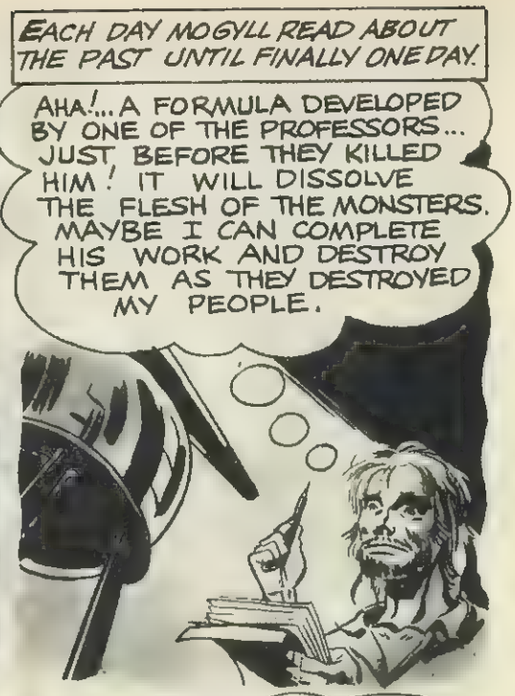
THEY HATE ME... I CAN FEEL IT... AND I HATE THEM. UGLY, MISSHAPPEN MONSTERS... I MUST GET FREE BEFORE THEY KILL ME.

ONE EVENING, WHEN MOGYLL'S GUARD LEFT THE GLASS DOOR UNLATCHED...

FREEDOM AT LAST! I MUST FIND SOMEWHERE TO HIDE...


MOGYLL FOUND REFUGE WITHIN THE WALLS OF AN OLD UNIVERSITY, AND SPENT HIS TIME READING...LEARNING...
PEOPLE LIKE ME ONCE RULED THE EARTH... UNTIL THEY WERE DESTROYED BY THE MONSTERS!

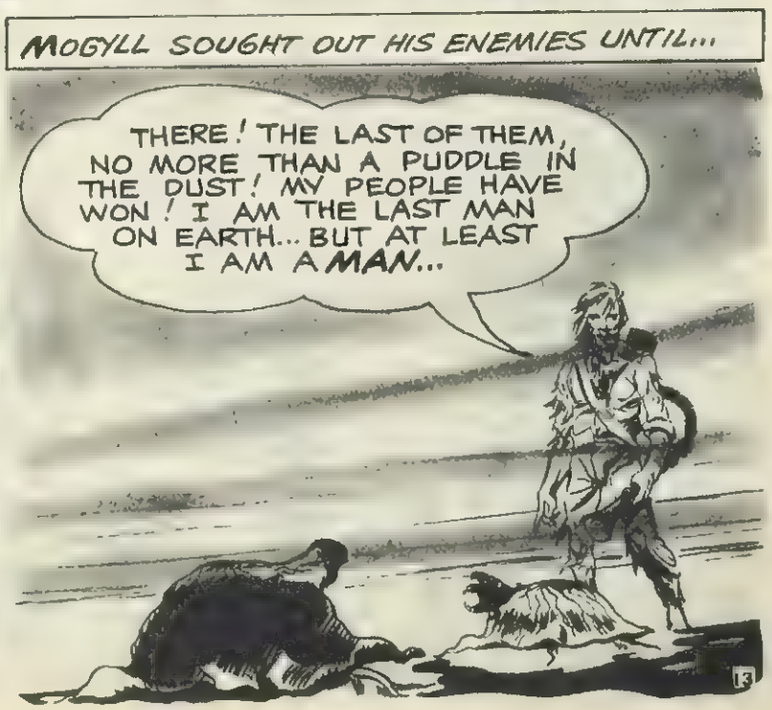
EACH EVENING THE MONSTERS PROWLED THE STREETS SEEKING HIM...
THEY'RE COMING IN HERE! MUST HIDE...


EACH DAY MOGYLL READ ABOUT THE PAST UNTIL FINALLY ONE DAY.
AHA!...A FORMULA DEVELOPED BY ONE OF THE PROFESSORS... JUST BEFORE THEY KILLED HIM! IT WILL DISSOLVE THE FLESH OF THE MONSTERS. MAYBE I CAN COMPLETE HIS WORK AND DESTROY THEM AS THEY DESTROYED MY PEOPLE.

LONG HOURS MOGYLL LABORED UNTIL...
THERE...IT IS PERFECTED AT LAST...NOW THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME TO DO BUT STAKE MY LIFE ON ITS SUCCESS!

AND THEN...
MAN FROM THE PAST! WE KILL!
WE'LL SOON SEE WHICH RACE WILL SURVIVE...YOURS OR MINE!

IT WORKS! IT WORKS!


MOGYLL SOUGHT OUT HIS ENEMIES UNTIL...
THERE! THE LAST OF THEM, NO MORE THAN A PUDDLE IN THE DUST! MY PEOPLE HAVE WON! I AM THE LAST MAN ON EARTH...BUT AT LEAST I AM A MAN...

IT WAS LATER IN THE EVENING WHEN MOGYLL CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF HIMSELF IN THE POOL...

I...I'M FINALLY CHANGING! I...I'M NOT A MAN... I'M BECOMING ONE OF THEM!

WITH THE CHANGE, CAME A STRANGE, UNREASONING HATE FOR THE PEOPLE OF OLD...

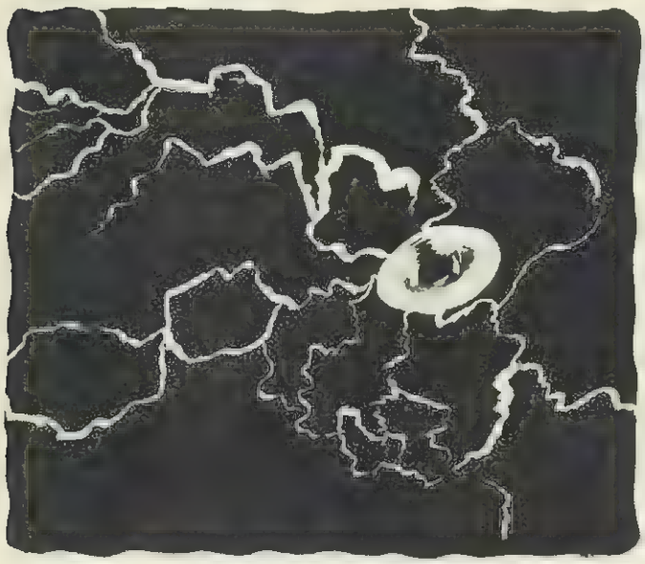
THEY MADE THE ATOMIC BOMB AND A BLOODY MONSTER OUT OF ME! MY MIND IS INTACT! I MUST GO BACK IN TIME AND DESTROY THOSE RESPONSIBLE!

CRACK

MOGYLL ROAMED THE EARTH LOOKING FOR A TIME MACHINE HE READ ABOUT IN THE BOOK OF SCIENCE AND ONE DAY. HE FOUND IT...

...MY SEARCH IS OVER. THERE'S THE TIME MACHINE, DUSTY BUT USEFUL! IF IT WORKS I CAN TRAVEL BACK INTO THE TWENTYTH CENTURY AND CONFORM THOSE DEVILS WHO BEGAN ALL THIS!

THE MACHINE WORKED AND MOGYLL JOURNEYED BACK TO THE DAYS OF HIS ANCESTORS!



AND MOGYLL EMERGED IN THE 20TH CENTURY...

I AM HERE. I NOW CAN DESTROY THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING ME WHAT I AM.

THE FIRST ONE TO SEE MOGYLL FROZE IN TERROR, BUT THE TERROR DIDN'T LAST LONG, FOR MOGYLL WORKED QUICKLY...

ARGGH

AND NOW FOR THE NEXT... AND THE NEXT... AND THE NEXT! I MUST KILL TO AVENGE MY PEOPLE.

AND SO IT GOES. FUTURE MAN CONTINUES TO CARRY OUT MANS DISEASE AND FATE, TO DESTROY MAN.

THE END

CREATURES OF STONEHENGE

THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, THE MYSTIC CULT OF THE DRUIDS PRACTICED THE SACRIFICIAL WORSHIP AT STONEHENGE! IT WAS HERE THAT CHARLES WINGATE BUILT HIS ESTATE! HE THOUGHT THAT THE SOLITUDE WOULD MAKE IT AN IDEAL PLACE FOR REST... BUT HE DIDN'T FIGURE ON THE DIABOLICAL INFLUENCE THE SILENT MONOLITHS WOULD HAVE ON HIM!

MONSTERS! --LET HER GO!

SEIZE HIM! THIS TIME WE'LL HAVE A DOUBLE SACRIFICE!

THESE STONES HAVE A BROODING, EERIE QUALITY ABOUT THEM! SAY, I WONDER IF THE DRUIDS HAD ANY MUSIC?

I SUPPOSE THEY DID BUT IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY PRIMITIVE!

YES... EVEN BARBARIC! HMM! I WONDER IF IT COULD BE WRITTEN-- RITUAL MUSIC FOR A DRUID CEREMONY! IT'S AN IDEA!

LATER AS THEY RETURNED TO THE WINGATE ESTATE!
MY BRAIN IS BUZZING WITH IDEAS, AND MY FINGERS ARE TREMBLING TO PLAY THESE HARMONIES! THE DRUID STONES GIVEN ME GREAT INSPIRATION!
FATHER! JONATHAN DOESN'T EVEN SEEM TO KNOW WE EXIST!
THAT'S IT! 'C' SHARP MAJOR! JUST THE KEY FOR AN OMINOUS OPENING!
LATER, WITH THE COMPOSITION UNFINISHED, JONATHAN COLLAPSES FROM EXHAUSTION!
JONATHAN! YOU PROMISED NOT TO COMPOSE! YOU CAME HERE TO REST!
SUDDENLY, JONATHAN AWOKE WITH HORROR-FILLED EYES--
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU MUST FINISH YOUR MUSIC FOR OUR CEREMONY!
--I--I CAN'T! ...I'VE LOST MY INSPIRATION!
THEN COME WITH ME! WHAT YOU SEE TONIGHT WILL HELP YOU FINISH YOUR MUSIC!

JONATHAN WAS TAKEN TO THE OLD STONEHENGE AND WAS ASTONISHED TO FIND...

...THEY'RE GOING TO **KILL** VIOLA'S FATHER! **STOP!**

HELP!

THE NEXT DAY...

THE CORONER SAID FATHER DIED OF A WOUND HE SUFFERED BY FALLING ON A SHARP STONE!

NO, VIOLA! IT'S **NOT** TRUE! I TELL YOU THE **DRUIDS** KILLED YOUR FATHER!

...I SAW IT ALL IN MY DREAMS... EVEN THE **STONE DAGGER!**

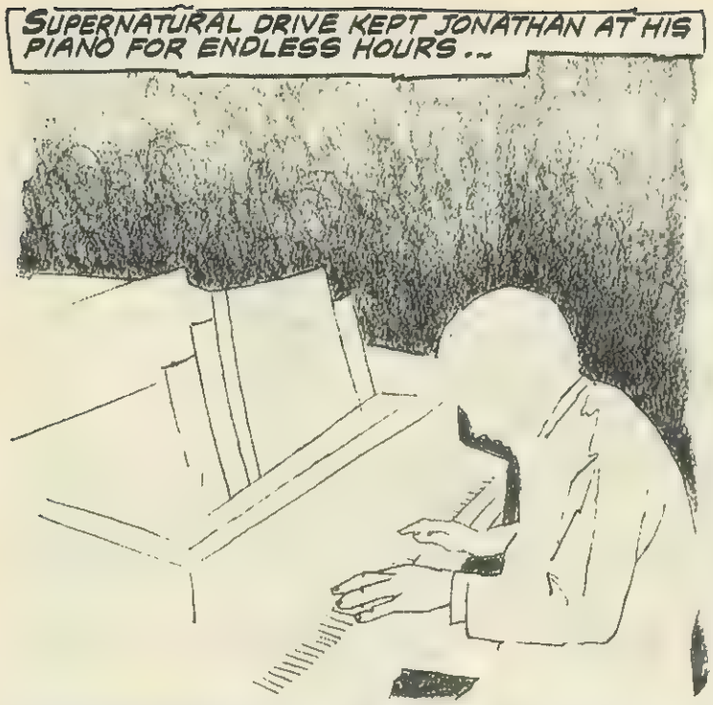
THAT NIGHT JONATHAN TRIED TO REST...HOWEVER...

I **CAN'T** SHAKE THIS COMPULSION TO FINISH THIS COMPOSITION! IT IS AS IF AN INVISIBLE FORCE IS PUSHING ME!

NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, JONATHAN'S MUSIC BROUGHT THE ANCIENT DRUIDS BACK TO LIFE AND MORE SACRIFICES BROUGHT THE POLICE!

INSPECTOR, BELIEVE ME! IT'S MY **MUSIC** THAT'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE HORRIBLE HAPPENINGS!

NONSENSE! I'M SURE THERE MUST BE A RATIONAL SOLUTION TO THIS OTHER THAN YOUR MUSIC!


SUPERNATURAL DRIVE KEPT JONATHAN AT HIS PIANO FOR ENDLESS HOURS...

Then...
NOW IT IS FINISHED!
THE MUSIC IS COMPLETED!
COME WITH US!

JONATHAN WAS TAKEN TO THE SACRED GROUNDS OF STONEHENGE WHERE THE RITUAL WAS ALREADY IN PROGRESS...
THEY'VE GOT SOMEONE! GOOD LORD! IT'S A WOMAN!

I-IT'S VIOLA! P-PLEASE...NO...

AIEEEEEEEEEE

LATER...
INSPECTOR, IF YOU'D BELIEVE ME AND COOPERATE, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE FOR YOURSELF!
ALLRIGHT, SON! WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE DEATHS! WE MAY BE ABLE TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE WITH YOUR HELP!

THAT NIGHT, AS THE INSPECTOR HID BEHIND THE CURTAINS, JONATHAN BEGAN HIS HAUNTING MUSIC...
GOOD LORD! HE WAS RIGHT! THERE ARE SUCH CREATURES!

AND NOW, FRIEND, YOU WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE! WE WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH TIME AND SPACE! YOU SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH US! COME... COME!

AS PREPLANNED, THE INSPECTOR AND HIS MEN WATCHED THE STRANGE PROCESSION...
...LOOKS LIKE JONATHAN IS HYPNOTIZED... EVERYBODY READY WITH THE TORCHES!
YES, SIR!

AS THEY GOT CLOSER TO THE RITUAL GROUNDS THE INSPECTOR'S SHOUTS SNAPPED JONATHAN BACK TO REALITY...
JONATHAN! OVER HERE... RUN!
HUH? WHA? TH' INSPECTOR!

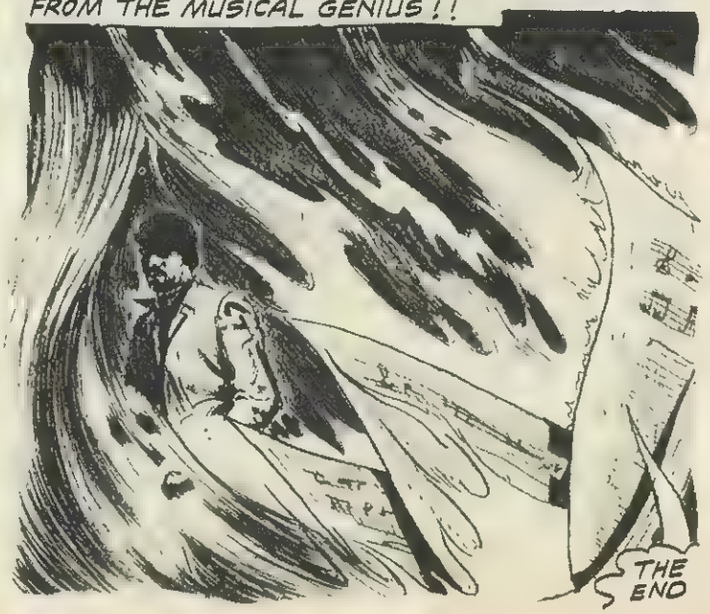
...STOP HIM!
HURRY!
WAIT! THE FIRE TORCHES!

THROW YOUR TORCHES AT THEM! THEY FEAR FIRE!
OOOAHHH!

THE DREAD OF FIRE AND THE HUMAN ONSLAUGHT FORCED THE CREATURES TO VANISH...

THERE'S JUST ONE MORE THING TO BE DONE!

I'LL HAVE TO BURN THAT TERRIBLE MUSIC I COMPOSED!
OF COURSE, WE UNDERSTAND, SON!


JONATHAN BURNED HIS MUSIC, BUT THE ORDEAL AT STONEHENGE PROVED TOO GREAT FOR HIM! TWO YEARS LATER, HIS MIND SNAPPED AND THE WORLD LOST WHATEVER GREAT MUSIC THAT MIGHT HAVE COME FROM THE MUSICAL GENIUS!!
THE END

the VAMPIRES

■ Gerard de l'Automne was meditating the rimes of a new ballade in honor of Fleurette, as he followed the leaf-arrased pathway toward Vyones through the woodland of Averoigne. Since he was on his way to meet Fleurette, who had promised to keep a rendezvous among the oaks and beeches like any peasant girl, Gerald himself made better progress than the ballade. His love was at that stage which, even for a professional troubadour, is more productive of distraction than inspiration; and he was recurrently absorbed in a meditation upon other than merely verbal felicities.

The grass and trees had assumed the fresh enamel of a medieval May; the turf was figured with little blossoms of azure and white and yellow, like an ornate broidery; and there was a pebbly stream that murmured beside the way, as if the voices of undines were parleying deliciously beneath its waters. The sun-lulled air was laden with a wafture of youth and romance; and the long-

ing that welled from the heart of Gerard seemed to mingle mystically with the balsams of the wood.

Gerard was a *trouvere* whose scant years and many wanderings had brought him a certain renown. After the fashion of his kind he had roamed from court to court, from chateau to chateau; and he was now the guest of the Comte de la Frenaie, whose high castle held dominion over half the surrounding forest. Visiting one day that Quaint cathedral town, Vyones, which lies so near to the ancient wood of Averoigne, Gerard had seen Fleurette, the daughter of a well-to-do mercer named Guillaume Cochin; and had become more sincerely enamored of her blond piquancy than was to be expected from one who had been so frequently susceptible in such matters. He had managed to make his feeling known to her; and, afeter a month of billets-doux, ballads and stolen interviews contrived by the help of a complaisant waiting-woman, she had made this woodland tryst with him in the absence of her father from Vyones. Accompanied by her maid and a man-servant, she was to leave the town early that afternoon and meet Gerard under a certain beech-tree of enormous age and size. The servants would then withdraw discreetly; and the lovers, to all intents and purposes, would be alone. It was not likely that they would be seen or interrupted; for the gnarled and immemorial wood possessed an ill-repute among the peasantry. Somewhere in this wood there was the ruinous and haunted Chateau des Faussesflammes; and, also, there was a double tomb, within which the Sieur Hugh du Malinbois and his chatelaine, who were notorious for sorcery in their time, had lain unconsecrated for more than two hundred years. Of these, and their phantoms, there gere grisly tales; and there were stories of loup-garous and goblins, of fays and devils and vampires that infested Averoigne. But to these tales Gerard had given little heed, considering it improbable that such creatures would fare abroad in open daylight. The madcap Fleurette had professed herself unafraid also; but it had been necessary to promise the servants a substantial *pourboire,* since they shared fully the local superstitions.

Gerard had wholly forgotten the legendry of Averoigne, as he hastened along the sun-flecked path. He was nearing the appointed beech-tree, which a turn of the path would soon reveal; and his pulses quickened and became tremulous, as he wondered if Fleurette had already reached the trysting-place. He abandoned all effort to continue his ballade, which, in the three miles he had walked from La Frenaie, had not progressed beyond the middle of a tentative first stanza.

His thoughts were such as would befit an ardent and impatient lover. They were now interrupted by a shrill scream that rose to an unendurable pitch of fear and horror, issuing from the green stillness of the pines beside the way. Startled, he peered at th thick branches; and as the scream fell back to silence, he heard the sound of dull and hurrying footfalls, and a scuffling as of several bodies. Again the scream arose. It was plainly the voice of a woman in some distressful peril. Loosening his dagger in its sheath, and clutching more firmly a long hornbeam staff which he had brought with him as a protection against the vipers which were said to lurk in Averoigne, he plunged without hesitation or premeditation among the low-hanging boughs from which the voice had seemed to emerge.

In a small open space beyond the trees, he saw a woman who was struggling with three ruffians of exceptionally brutal and evil aspect. Even in the haste and vehemence of the moment, Gerard realized that he had never before seen such men or such a woman. The woman was clad in a gown of emerald green that matched her eyes; in her face was the pallor of dead things, together with a faery beauty; and her lips were dyed as with the scarlet of newly flowing blood. The men were dark as Moors, and their eyes were red slits of flame beneath oblique brows with animal-like bristles. There was something very peculiar in the shape of their feet; but Gerard did not realize the exact nature of the peculiarity till long afterward. Then he remembered that all of them were seemingly club-footed, though they were able to move with surpassing agility. Somehow, he could never recall what sort of clothing they had worn.

The woman turned a beseeching gaze upon Gerard as he sprang forth from amid the boughs. The men, however, did not seem to heed his coming; though one of them caught in a hairy clutch the hands which the woman sougt to reach toward her rescuer.

Lifting his staff, Gerard rushed upon the ruffians. He struck a tremendous blow at the head of the nearest one — a blow that should have leveled the fellow to earth. But the staff came down on unresisting air, and Gerard staggered and almost fell headlong in trying to recover his equilibrium. Dazed and uncomprehending, he saw the knot of struggling figures had vanished utterly. At least, the three men had vanished; but from the middle branches of a tall pine beyond the open space, the death-white features of the woman smiled upon him for a moment with faint, inscrutable guile ere they melted among the needles.

Gerard understood now; and he shivered as he crossed himself. He had been deluded by phantoms or demons, doubtless for no good purpose; he had been the gull of a questionable enchantment. Plainly there was something after all in the legends he had heard, in the ill-renown of the forest of Averoigne.

He retraced his way toward the path he had been following. But when he thought to reach again the spot from which he had heard that shrill unearthly scream, he saw that there was no longer a path; nor, indeed, any feature of the forest which he could remember or recognize. The foliage about him no longer displayed a brilliant verdure; it was sad and funeral, and the trees themselves were either cypress-like, or were already sere with autumn or decay. In lieu of the purling brook there lay before him a tarn of waters that were dark and dull as

clotting blood, and which gave back no reflection of the brown autumnal sedges that trailed therein like the hair of suicides, and the skeletons of roting osiers that writhed above them.

Now, beyond all question, Gerard knew that he was the victim of an evil enchantment. In answering that beguileful cry for succor, he had exposed himself to the spell, had been lured within the circle of its power. He could not know what forces of wizardry or demonry had willed to draw him thus; but he knew that his situation was fraught with supernatural menace. He gripped the hornbeam staff more tightly in his hand, and prayed to all the saints he could remember, as he peered about for some tangible bodily presence of ill.

The scene was utterly desolate and lifeless, like a place where cadavers might keep their tryst with demons. Nothing stirred, not even a dead leaf; and there was no whisper of dry grass or foliage, no song of birds nor murmuring of bees, no sigh nor chuckle of water. The corpse-gray heavens above seemed never to have held a sun; and the chill, unchanging light was without source or destination, without beams or shadows.

Gerard surveyed his environment with a cautious eye; and the more he looked the less he liked it; for some new and disagreeable detail was manifest at every glance. There were moving lights in the wood that vanished if he eyed them intently; there were drowned faces in the tarn that came and went like vivid bubbles before he could discern their features.

And, peering across the lake, he wondered why he had not seen the many-turreted castle of hoary stone whose nearer walls were based in the dead waters. It was so gray and still and vast, that it seemed to have stood for incomputable ages between the stagnant heavens. It was ancienter than the world, it was older than the light; it was coeval with fear and darkness; and a horror dwelt upon it and crept unseen but palpable along its bastions.

There was no sign of life about the castle; and no banners flew above its turrets or its donjon. But Gerard knew, as surely as if a voice had spoken aloud to warn him, that here was the fountainhead of sorcery by which he had been beguiled. A growing panic whispered in his brain, he seemed to hear the rustle of malignant plumes, the mutter of demonian threats and plottings. He turned, and fled among the funereal trees.

Amid his dismay and wilderment, even as he fled, he thought of Fleurette and wondered if she were awaiting him at their place of rendezvous, or if she and her companions had also been enticed and led astray in a realm of damnable unrealities. He renewed his prayers, and implored the saints for her safety as well as his own.

The forest through which he ran was a maze of bafflement and eeriness. There were no landmarks, there were no tracks of animals or men; and the swart cypresses and sere autumnal trees grew thicker and thicker as if some malevolent will were marshalling them against his progress. The boughs were like implacable arms that strove to retard him; he could have sworn that he felt them twine about him with the strength and suppleness of living things. He fought them, insanely, desperately, and seemed to hear a crackling of infernal laughter in their twigs as he fought. At last, with a sob of relief, he broke through into a sort of trail. Along this trail, in the mad hope of eventual escape, he ran like one whom a fiend pursues; and after a short interval he came again to the shores of the tarn, above whose motionless waters the high and hoary turrets of that time-forgotten castle were still dominant. Again he turned and fled; and once more, after similar wanderings and like struggles, he came back to the inevitable tarn.

With a leaden sinking of his heart, as into some ultimate slough of despair and terror, he resigned himself and made no further effort to escape. His very will was benumbered, was crushed down as by the incumbence of a superior volition that would no longer permit his puny recalci-

trance. He was unable to resist when a strong and hateful compulsion drew his footsteps along the margent of the tarn toward the looming castle.

When he came nearer, he saw that the edifice was surrounded by a moat whose waters were stagnant as those of the lake, and were mantled with the iridescent scum of corruption. The drawbridge was down and the gates were open, as if to receive an expected guest. But still there was no sign of human occupancy; and the walls of the great gray building were silent as those of a sepulcher. And more tomb-like even than the rest was the square and overtowering bulk of the mighty donjon.

Impelled by the same power that had drawn him along the lake-shore, Gerard crossed the drawbridge and passed beneath the frowing barbican into a vacant courtyard. Barred windows looked blankly down; and at the opposite end of the court a door stood mysteriously open, revealing a dark hall. As he approached the doorway, he saw that a man was standing on the threshold; though a moment previous he could have sworn that it was untenanted by any visible form.

Gerard had retained his hornbeam staff; and though his reason told him that such a weapon was futile against any supernatural foe, some obscure instinct promoted him to clasp it valiantly as he neared the waiting figure on the sill.

The man was inordinately tall and cadaverous, and was dressed in black garments of a superannuate mode. His lips were strangely red, amid his bluish beard and the mortuary whiteness of his face. They were like the lips of the woman who, with her assailants, had disappeared in a manner so dubious when Gerard had approached them. His eyes were pale and luminous as marsh-light; and Gerard shuddered at his gaze and at the cold, ironic smile of his scarlet lips, that seemed to reserve a world of secrets all too dreadful and hideous to be disclosed.

"I am the Sieur du Malinbois," the man announced. His tones were both unctuous and hollow, and served to increase the repugnance felt by the young troubadour. And when his lips parted, Gerard had a glimpse of teeth that were unnaturally small and were pointed like the fangs of some fierce animal.

"Fortune has willed that you should become my guest," the man went on. "The hospitality which I can proffer you is rough and inadequate, and it may be that you will find my abode a trifle dismal. But at least I can assure you of a welcome no less ready than sincere."

"I thank you for your kind offer,' said Gerard. "But I have an appointment with a friend; and I seem in some unaccountable manner to have lost my way. I should be profoundly grateful if you would direct me toward Vyones. There should be a path not far from here; and I have been so stupid as to stray from it."

The words rang empty and hopeless in his own ears even as he uttered them; and the name that his strange host had given—the Sieur du Malinbois—was haunting his mind like the funereal accents of a knell; though he could not recall at that moment the macabre and spectral ideas which the name tended to evoke.

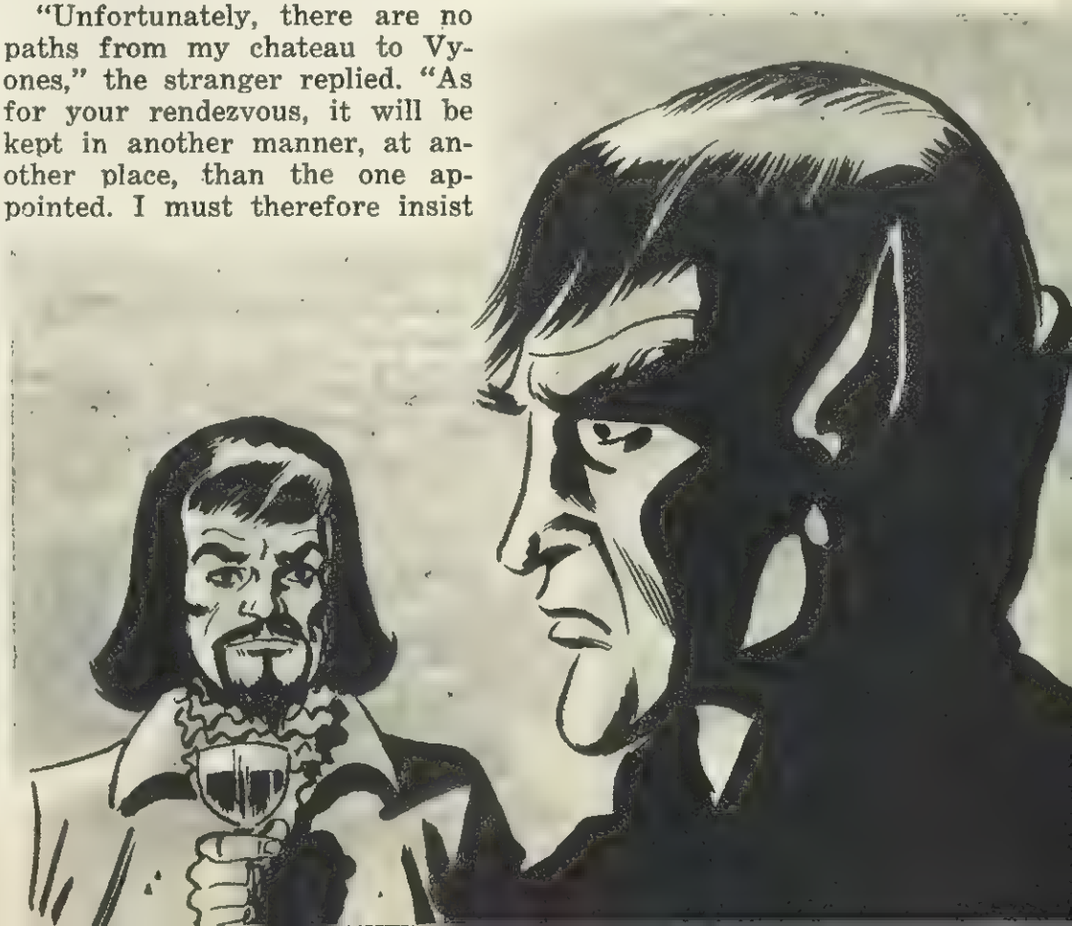
"Unfortunately, there are no paths from my chateau to Vyones," the stranger replied. "As for your rendezvous, it will be kept in another manner, at another place, than the one appointed. I must therefore insist that you accept my hospitality. Enter, I pray; but leave your hornbeam staff at the door. You will have no need of it any longer."

Gerard thought that he made a move of distaste and aversion with his over-red lips as he spoke the last sentences; and that his eyes lingered on the staff with an obscure apprehensiveness. And the strange emphasis of his words and demeanor served to awaken other fantasmal and macabre thoughts in Gerard's brain; though he could not formulate them fully till afterward. And somehow he was prompted to retain the weapon, no matter how useless it might be against an enemy of spectral or diabolic nature. So he said:

"I must crave your indulgence if I retain the staff. I have made a vow to carry it with me, in my right hand or never beyond arm's reach, till I have slain two vipers."

"That is a queer vow," rejoined his host. "However, bring it with you if you like. It is of no matter to me if you choose to encumber yourself with a wooden stick."

He turned abruptly, motioning Gerard to follow him. The troubadour obeyer unwillingly, with one rearward glance at the vacant heavens and the empty courtyard. He saw with no great surprise



that a sudden and furtive darkness had closed in upon the chateau without moon or star, as if it had been merely waiting for him to enter before it descended. It was thick as the folds of a serecloth, it was airless and stifling like the gloom of a sepulcher that has been sealed for ages; and Gerard was aware of a veritable oppression, a corporeal and psychic difficulty in breathing, as he crossed the threshold.

He saw that chessets were now burning in the dim hall to which his host had admitted him; though he had not perceived the time and agency of their lighting. The illumination they afforded was singularly vague and indistinct, and the thronging shadows of the hall were unexplainably numerous and moved with a mysterious disquiet; though the flames themselves were still as tapers that burn for the dead in a windless vault.

At the end of the passage, the Sieur du Malinbois flung open a heavy door of dark and somber wood. Beyond, in what was plainly the eating-room of the chateau, several people were seated about a long table by the light of cressets no less dreary and dismal than those in the hall. In the strange, uncertain glow, their faces were touched with a gloomy dubiety, with a lurid distortion; and it seemed to Gerard that shadows hardly distinguishable from the figures were gathered around the board. But nevertheless he recognized the assembled company at a glance, with an overpowering shock of astonishment.

At one end of the board, there sat the woman in emerald green who had vanished in so doubtful a fashion amid the pines when Gerard answered her call for succor. At one side, looking very pale and forlorn and frightened, was Fleurette Cochin. At the lower end reserved for retainers and inferiors, there sat the maid and the man-servant who had accompanied Fleurette to her rendezvous with Gerard.

The Sieur du Malimbois turned to the troubadourswith a smile of sardonic amusement.

"I believe you have already met every one assembled," he observed. "But you have not yet been formally presented to my, Agathe, who is presiding over the board. Agathe, I bring to you Gerard de l'Automne, a young troubadour of much note and merit."

The woman nodded slightly, without speaking, and pointed to a chair opposite Fleurette. Gerard seated himself, and the Sieur du Malinbois assumed according to feudal custom a place at the head of the table beside his wife.

Now, for the first time, Gerard noticed that there were servitors who came and went in the room, setting upon the table various wines and viands. The servitors were preternaturally swift and noiseless, and somehow it was very difficult to be sure of their precise features or their costumes. They seemed to walk in an adumbration of sinister insoluble twilight. But the troubadour was disturbed by a feeling that they resembled the swart demoniac ruffians who had disappeared together with the woman in green when he approached them.

The meal that ensued was a weird and funereal affair. A sense of insuperable constraint, of smothering horror and hideous oppression, was upon Gerard; and though he wanted to ask Fleurette a hundred questions, and also demand an explanation of sundry matters from his host and hostess, he was totally unable to frame the words or to utter them. He could only look at Feurette, and read in her eyes a duplication of his own helpless bewilderment and nightmare thralldom. Nothing was said by the Sieur du Malnbois and his lady, who were exchanging glances of a secret and baleful intelligence all through the meal; and Fleurette's maid and man-servant were obviously paralyzed by terror, like birds beneath the hypnotic gaze of deadly serpents.

The foods were rich and of strange savor; and the wines were fabulously old, and seemed to retain in their topaz or violet depths the unextinguished fire of buried centuries. But Gerard and Fleurette could barely touch them; and they saw that the Sieur du Malinbois and his lady did not eat or drink at all. The gloom of the chamber deepened; the servitors became more furtive and spectral in their movements; the stifling air was laden with unformulable menace, was constrained by the spell of a lack and lethal necromancy. Above the aromas of the

rare foods, the bouquets of the antique wines, there crept forth the choking mustiness of hidden vaults and embalmed centurial corruption, together with the whostly spice of a strange perfume that seemed to emanate from the person of the chatelaine. And now Gerard was remembering many tales from the legendry of Averoigne, which he had heard and disregarded; was recalling the story of a Sieur du Malinbois and his lady, the last of the name and the most evil, who had been buried somewhere in this forest hundreds of years ago; and whose tomb was shunned by the peasantry since they were said to continue their sorceries even in death. He wondered what influence had bedrugged his memory, that he had not recalled it wholly when he had first heard the name. And he was remembering other things and other stories, all of which confirmed his instinctive belief regarding the nature of the people into whose hands he had fallen. Also, he recalled a folklore superstition concerning the use to which a wooden stake can be put; and realized why the Sieur du Malinbois had shown a peculiar interest in the hornbeam staff. Gerard had laid the staff beside his chair when he sat down; and he was reassured to find that it had not vanished. Very quietly and unobstrusively, he placed his foot upon it.

The uncanny meal came to an end; and the host and his chatelaine rose.

"I shall now conduct you to your rooms," said the Sieur du Malinbois, including all of his guests in a dark, inscrutable glance. "Each of you can have a separate chamber, if you so desire: or Fleurette Cochin and her maid Angelique can remain together; and the man-servant Raoul can sleep in the same room with Messire Gerard."

A preference for the latter procedure was voiced by Fleurette and the troubadour. The thought of uncompanioned solitude in that castle of timeless midnight and nameless mystery was abhorrent to an insupportable degree.

The four were now led to their

respective chambers, on opposite sides of a hall whose length was but indeterminately revealed by the dismal lights. Fleurette and Gerard bade each other a dismayed and reluctant good-night beneath the constraining eye of their host. Their rendezvous was hardly the one which they had thought to keep; and both were overwhelmed by a supernatural situation amid whose dubious horrors and ineluctable sorceries they had somehow become involved. And no sooner had Gerard left Fleurette than he began to curse himself for a poltroon because he had not refused to part from her side; and he marvelled at the spell of drug-like involition that had bedrowsed all his faculties. It seemed that his will was not his own, but had been thrust down and throttled by an alien power.

The room assigned to Gerard and Raoul was furnished with a couch, and a great bed whose curtains were of antique fashion and fabric. It was lighted with tapers that had a funereal suggestion in their form, and which burned dully in an air that was stagnant with the mustiness of dead years.

"May you sleep soundly," said the Sieur du Malinbois. The smile that accompanied and followed the words was no less unpleasant than the oily and sepulchral tones in which they were uttered. The troubadours and the servant were conscious of profound relief when he went out and closed the leaden-clanging door. And their relief was hardly diminished even when they heard the click of a key in the lock.

Gerard was now inspecting the room; and he went to the one window, through whose small and deep-set panes he could see only the pressing darkness of a night that was veritably solid, as if the whole place were buried beneath the earth and were closed in by clinging mold. Then, with an access of unsmothered rage at his separation from Fleurette, he ran to the door and hurled himself against it, he beat upon it with his clenched fists, but in vain. Realizing his folly, and desisting at last, he turned to Raoul.

"Well, Raoul," he said, "what do you think of all this?"

Raoul crossed himself before he answered; and his face had assumed the vizard of a mortal fear.

"I think, Messire," he finally replied, "that we have all been decoyed by a malefic sorcery; and that you, myself, the demoiselle Fleurette, and the maid Angelique, are all in deadly peril of both soul and body."

"That, also, is my thought," said Gerard. "And I believe it would be well that you and I should sleep only by turns; and that he who keeps vigil should retain in his hands my hornbeam staff, whose end I shall now sharpen with my dagger. I am sure that you know the manner in which it should be employed if there are any intruders; for if such should come, there would be no doubt as to their character and their intentions. We are in a castle which has no legitimate existence, as the guests of people who have been dead, or supposed-

ly dead, for more than two hundred years. And such people, when they stir abroad, are prone to habits which I need not specify."

"Yes, Messire." Raoul shuddered; but he watched the sharpening of the staff with considerable interest. Gerard whittled the hard wood to a lance-like point, and hid the shavings carefully. He even carved the outline of a little cross near the middle of the staff, thinking that this might increase its efficacy or save it from molestation. Then, with the staff in his hand, he sat down upon the bed, where he could survey the litten room from between the curtains.

"You can sleep first, Raoul." He indicated the couch, which was near the door.

The two conversed in a fitful manner for some minutes. After hearing Raoul's tale of how Fleurette, Angelique and himself had been led astray by the sobbing of a woman amid the pines, and had been unable to retrace their way, the troubadour changed the theme. And henceforth he spoke idly and of matters remote from his real preoccupations, to fight down his torturing concern for the safety of Fleurette. Suddenly he became aware that Raoul had ceased to reply: and saw that the servant had fallen asleep on the couch. At the same time an irresistable drowsiness surged upon Gerard himself in spite of all his volition, in spite of the eldritch terrors and forebodings that still murmured in his brain. He heard through his growing hebetude a whisper as of shadowy wings in the castle halls; he caught the sibilation of ominous voices, like those of familiars that respond to the summoning of wizards; and he seemed to hear, even in the vaults and towers and remote chambers, the tread of feet that were hurrying on malign and secret errands. But oblivion was around him like the meshes of a sable net; and it closed in relentlessly upon his troubled mind, and drowned the alarms of his agitated senses.

When Gerard awoke at length, the tapers had burned to their sockets; and a sad and sunless daylight was filtering through the window. The staff was still in his hand; and though his senses were still dull with the strange slumber that had drugged them, he felt that he was unharmed. But peering between the curtains, he saw that Raoul was lying mortally pale and lifeless on the couch, with the air and look of an exhausted moribund.

He crossed the room, and stopped above the servant. There was a small red wound on Raoul's neck; and his pulses were slow and feeble, like those of one who has lost a great amount of blood. His very appearance was withered and vein-drawn. And a phantom spice arose from the couch—a lingering wraith of the perfume worn by the chatelaine Agathe.

Gerard succeeded at last in arousing the man; but Raoul was very weak and drowsy. He could remember nothing of what had happened during the night; and his horror was pitiful to behold when he realized the truth.

"It will be your turn next, Messire." he cried. "These vampires mean to hold us here amid their unhallowed necromancies till

they have drained us of our last drop of blood. Their spells are like mandragora or the sleepy sirups of Cathay; and no man can keep awake in their despite."

Gerard was trying the door; and somewhat to his surprise he found it unlocked. The departing vampire had been careless, in the lethargy of her repletion. The castle was very still; and it seemed to Gerard that the animating spirit of evil was now quiescent; that the shadowy wings of horror and malignity, the feet that had sped on baleful errands, the summoning sorcerers, the responding familiars, were all lulled in a temporary slumber.

He opened the door, he tiptoed along the deserted hall, and knocked at the portal of the chamber allotted to Fleurette and her maid. Fleurette, fully dressed, answered his knock immediately; and he caught her in his arms without a word, searching her wan face with a tender anxiety. Over her shoulder he could see the maid Angelique, who was sitting listlessly on the bed with a mark on her white neck similar to the wound that had been suffered by Raoul. He knew, even before Fleurette began to speak, that the nocturnal experiences of the demoiselle and her maid had been identical with those of himself and the man-servant.

While he tried to comfort Fleurette and reassure her, his thoughts were now busy with a rather curious problem. No one was abroad in the castle; and it was more than probable that the Sieur du Malinbois and his lady were both asleep after the nocturnal feast which they had undoubtedly enjoyed. Gerard pictured to himself the place and the fashion of their slumber; and he grew even more reflective as certain possibilities occurred to him.

"Be of good cheer, sweetheart," he said to Fleurette. "It is in my mind that we may soon escape from this abominable mesh of enchantments. But I must leave you for a little and speak again with Raoul, whose help I shall require in a certain matter."

He went back to his own chamber. The man-servant was sitting on the couch and was crossing himself feebly and muttering prayers with a faint, hollow voice.

"Raoul," said the troubadour a little sternly, "you must gather all your strength and come with me. Amid the gloomy walls that surround us, the somber ancient halls, the high towers and the heavy bastions, there is but one thing that veritably exists; and all the rest is a fabric of illusion. We must find the reality whereof I speak, and deal with it like true and valiant Christians. Come, we will now search the castle ere the lord and chatelaine shall awaken from their vampire lethargy."

He led the way along the devious corridors with a swiftness that betokened much forethought. He had reconstructed in his mind the hoary pile of battlements and turrets as he had seen them on the previous day; and he felt that the great donjon, being the center and stronghold of the edifice, might well be the place which he sought. With the sharpened staff in his hand, with Raoul lagging bloodlessly at his heels, he passed the doors of many secret rooms, the many windows that gave on the blindness of an inner court, and came at last to the lower story of the donjon-keep.

It was a large, bare room, entirely built of stone, and illumined only by narrow slits high up in the wall, that had been designed for the use of archers. The place was very dim; but Gerard could see the glimmering outlines of an object not ordinarily to be looked for in such a situation, that arose from the middle of the floor. It was a tomb of marble; and stepping nearer, he saw that it was strangely weather-worn and was blotched by lichens of gray and yellow, such as flourish only within access of the sun. The slab that covered it was doubly broad and massive, and would require the full strength of two men to lift.

Raoul was staring stupidly at the tomb. "What now, Messire?" he queried.

"You and I, Raoul, are about to intrude upon the bedchamber of our host and hostess."

At this direction, Raoul seized one end of the slab; and he himself took the other. With a mighty effort that strained their bones and sinews to the cracking-point, they sought to remove it; but the slab hardly stirred. At length, by grasping the same end in unison, they were able to tilt the slab; and it slid away and dropped to the floor with a thunderous crash. Within, there were two open coffins, one of which contained the Sieur Hugh du Malinbois and the other his lady Agathe. Both of them appeared to be slumbering peacefully as infants; a look of tranquil evil, of pacified malignity, was imprinted upon their features; and their lips were dyed with a fresher scarlet than before.

Without hesitation or delay, Gerard plunged the lance-like end of his staff into the bosom of the Sieur du Malinbois. The body crumbled as if it were wrought of ashes kneaded and painted to a human semblance; and a slight odor as of age-old corruption arose to the nostrils of Gerard. Then the troubadour pierced in like manner the bosom of the chatelaine. And simultaneously with her dissolution, the walls and floor of the donjon seemed to dissolve like a sullen vapor, they rolled away on every side with a shock as of unheard thunder. With a sense of indescribable vertigo and confusion Gerard and Raoul saw the whole chateau had vanished like the towers and battlements of a bygone storm; that the dead lake and its rotting shores no longer offered their malefical illusion to the eye. They were standing in a forest-glade, in the full unshadowed light of the afternoon sun; and all that remained of the dismal castle was the lichen-mantled tomb that stood open beside them. Fleurette and her maid were a little distance away; and Gerard ran to the mercer's daughter and took her in his arms. She was dazed with wonderment, like one who emerges from the night-long labyrinth of an evil dream, and finds that all is well.

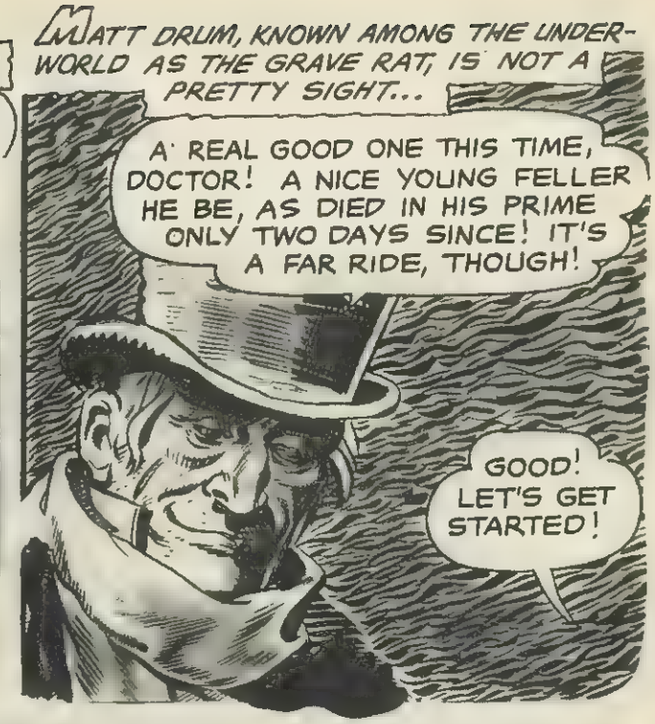
"I think, sweeheart," said Gerard, "that our next rendezvous will not be interrupted by the Sieur du Malinbois and his chatelaine."

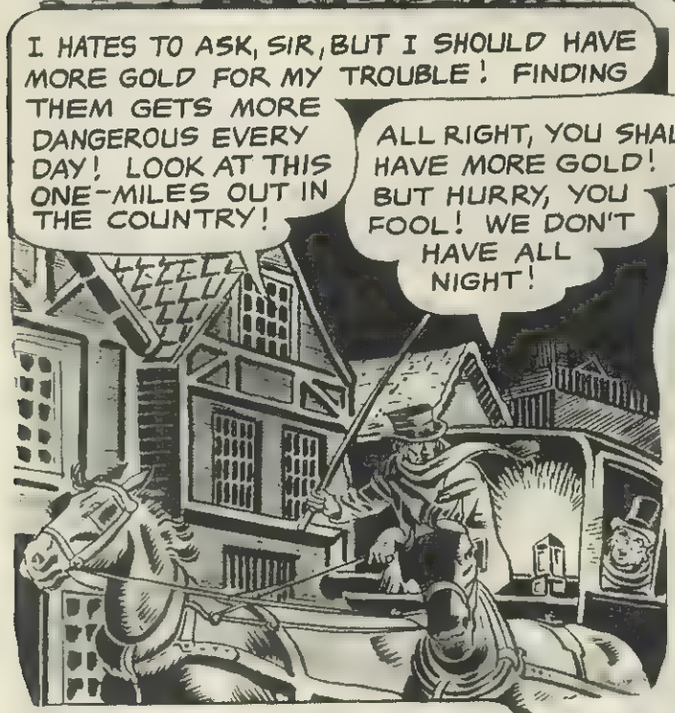
But Fleurette was still bemused with wonder, and could only answer him with a kiss. ●

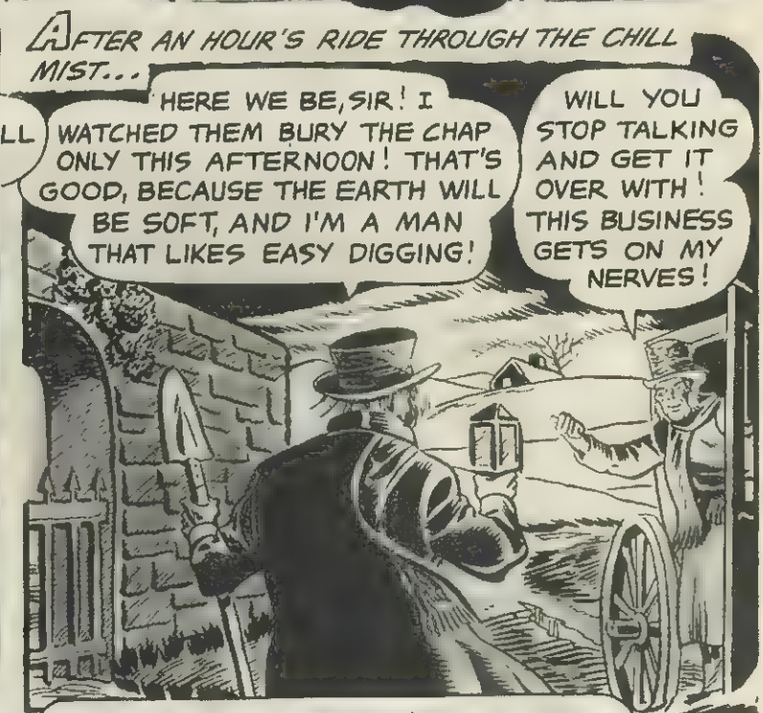
IN SCOTLAND, WHERE IN THE WINTER THE FOG HANGS COLD AND BLEAK AND WATER FILLS THE GRAVES OF THE NEW DEAD, THERE ONCE FLOURISHED THE MOST HORRIBLE OF CRIMES—BODY SNATCHING! DOCTORS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS, DESPERATE FOR CADAVERS UPON WHICH TO EXPERIMENT, HIRED THE SCUM OF EDINBURGH'S UNDERWORLD, GALLOW'S BAIT OF EVERY DESCRIPTION, TO STEAL BODIES FROM NEWLY DUG GRAVES! RESPECTABLE MEN, FAMOUS IN THEIR PROFESSION, ALSO INDULGED IN THIS DARK PRACTICE, AND THEREBY HANGS THE DREAD TALE OF JOHN ABERNATHY, WHO FOUND HIMSELF AT THE MERCY OF A MAN NAMED DRUM, MORE SINISTERELY KNOWN AS **THE GRAVE RAT**...

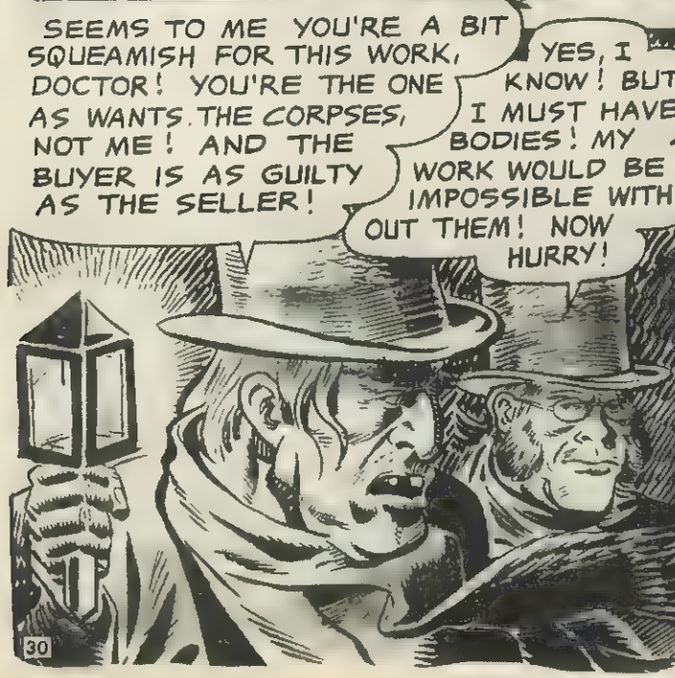
THE VANISHING DEAD

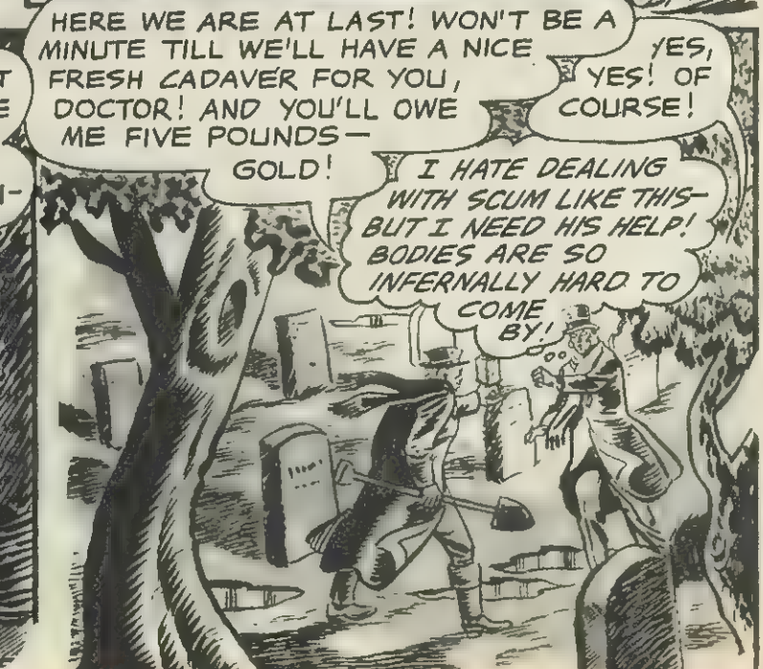
MINUTES LATER THE DOCTOR APPROACHES A CARRIAGE, WAITING LIKE A BLACK COFFIN BENEATH THE FOG SHROUD...
YOU, THERE, DRUM! I SEE YOU'RE ON TIME FOR ONCE! HAVE YOU, ER, FOUND ANYTHING FOR ME?
AYE, DOCTOR! A GOOD ONE!


MATT DRUM, KNOWN AMONG THE UNDERWORLD AS THE GRAVE RAT, IS NOT A PRETTY SIGHT...
A REAL GOOD ONE THIS TIME, DOCTOR! A NICE YOUNG FELLER HE BE, AS DIED IN HIS PRIME ONLY TWO DAYS SINCE! IT'S A FAR RIDE, THOUGH!
GOOD! LET'S GET STARTED!

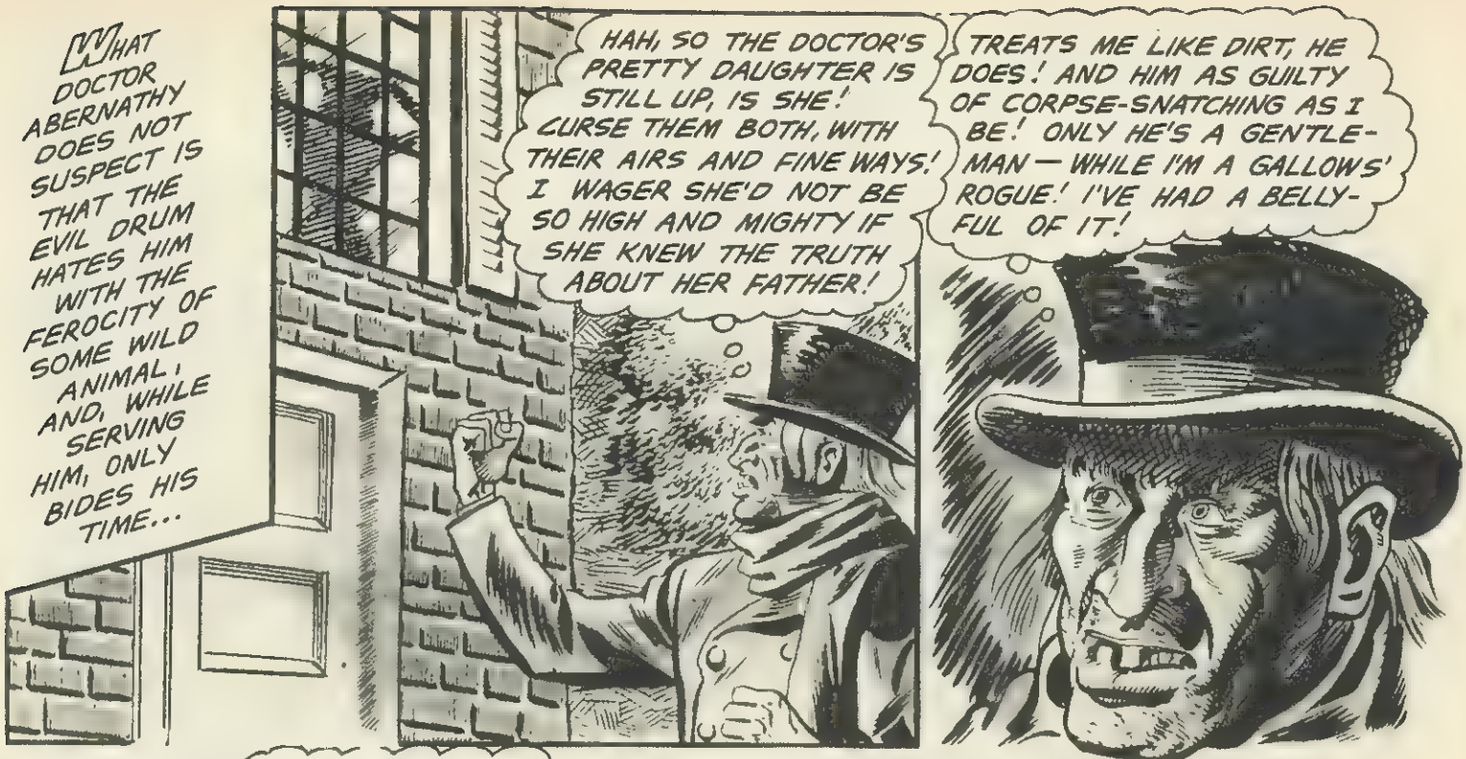

I HATES TO ASK, SIR, BUT I SHOULD HAVE MORE GOLD FOR MY TROUBLE! FINDING THEM GETS MORE DANGEROUS EVERY DAY! LOOK AT THIS ONE—MILES OUT IN THE COUNTRY!
ALL RIGHT, YOU SHALL HAVE MORE GOLD! BUT HURRY, YOU FOOL! WE DON'T HAVE ALL NIGHT!


AFTER AN HOUR'S RIDE THROUGH THE CHILL MIST...
HERE WE BE, SIR! I WATCHED THEM BURY THE CHAP ONLY THIS AFTERNOON! THAT'S GOOD, BECAUSE THE EARTH WILL BE SOFT, AND I'M A MAN THAT LIKES EASY DIGGING!
WILL YOU STOP TALKING AND GET IT OVER WITH! THIS BUSINESS GETS ON MY NERVES!

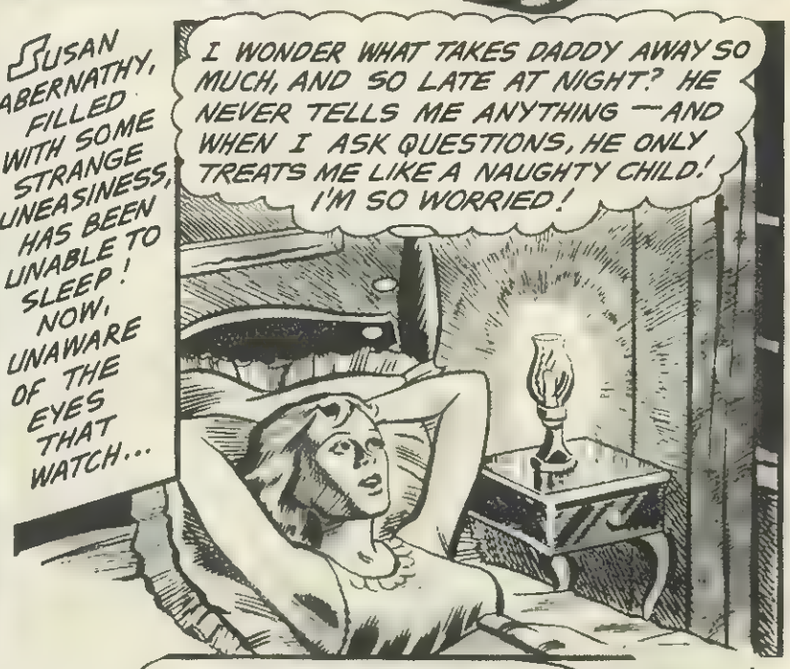

SEEMS TO ME YOU'RE A BIT SQUEAMISH FOR THIS WORK, DOCTOR! YOU'RE THE ONE AS WANTS THE CORPSES, NOT ME! AND THE BUYER IS AS GUILTY AS THE SELLER!
YES, I KNOW! BUT I MUST HAVE BODIES! MY WORK WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THEM! NOW HURRY!


HERE WE ARE AT LAST! WON'T BE A MINUTE TILL WE'LL HAVE A NICE FRESH CADAVER FOR YOU, DOCTOR! AND YOU'LL OWE ME FIVE POUNDS— GOLD!
YES, YES! OF COURSE!
I HATE DEALING WITH SCUM LIKE THIS— BUT I NEED HIS HELP! BODIES ARE SO INFERNALLY HARD TO COME BY!

FOR A TIME THE ONLY SOUND IS THE SLITHERING OF LOOSE EARTH AND THE MOAN OF WIND IN THE STARK TREES...
FASTER, MAN, FASTER! I THOUGHT I HEARD A COCK CROW THEN!
WON'T BE BUT A MINUTE NOW, SIR! I CAN FEEL THE COFFIN UNDER MY SPADE!
THERE WE ARE! HE'S A—(GASP)—HEAVY SORT OF CHAP! BUT WE'VE GOT HIM RIGHT ENOUGH!
TAKE HIM OUT OF THE COFFIN AND PUT IT BACK, THEN COVER IT OVER! LEAVE NO TRACE TO SHOW WE'VE BEEN HERE!
MINUTES LATER ALL SIGNS OF THE GHOULISH DEED HAVE BEEN OBLITERATED...
PUT HIM IN THE BACK WITH ME AND I'LL COVER HIM WITH A ROBE! THEN DRIVE STRAIGHT TO MY HOME— THE SIDE ENTRANCE TO THE LABORATORY!
SURE, DOCTOR! I WASN'T HARDLY—(CHUCKLE)—FIGURING ON HIM RIDING UP ON THE BOX WITH ME!
BE CAREFUL, YOU FOOL! DON'T WRECK US! IF WE'RE CAUGHT WITH THIS BODY, WE'LL BOTH HANG!
NEVER FEAR, DOCTOR! OLD DRUM KNOWS HOW TO HANDLE HORSES! YOU JUST LEAVE THE DRIVING TO ME AND I'LL LEAVE THE CUTTING UP TO YOU!
LATER AS THEY REACH EDINBURGH AND THE DOCTOR'S HOME...
QUICKLY, NOW! IN WITH IT!
BLAST ME IF HE AIN'T A HEAVY ONE! SEEMS ALMOST A PITY FOR A PRIME YOUNG FELLER LIKE THIS TO DIE SO SOON— EVEN IF IT DOES MEAN GOLD IN MY POCKET!
AND THERE YOU ARE, SIR, JUST AS I PROMISED! A REAL NICE ONE, ALL DELIVERED! NOW IF YOU'LL OBLIGE ME...
YES, I KNOW! YOUR MONEY! HERE YOU ARE!
FIVE GUINEAS! NOW GET OUT! I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I NEED YOU AGAIN, DRUM!
YOU'RE NOT A VERY HOSPITABLE MAN, DOCTOR! NOT EVEN THE OFFER OF A DRINK AFTER A COLD RIDE! WELL— GOOD-NIGHT TO YOU!


WHAT DOCTOR ABERNATHY DOES NOT SUSPECT IS THAT THE EVIL DRUM HATES HIM WITH THE FEROCITY OF SOME WILD ANIMAL, AND, WHILE SERVING HIM, ONLY BIDES HIS TIME...
HAH, SO THE DOCTOR'S PRETTY DAUGHTER IS STILL UP, IS SHE! CURSE THEM BOTH, WITH THEIR AIRS AND FINE WAYS! I WAGER SHE'D NOT BE SO HIGH AND MIGHTY IF SHE KNEW THE TRUTH ABOUT HER FATHER!
TREATS ME LIKE DIRT, HE DOES! AND HIM AS GUILTY OF CORPSE-SNATCHING AS I BE! ONLY HE'S A GENTLEMAN — WHILE I'M A GALLOWS' ROGUE! I'VE HAD A BELLYFUL OF IT!

AYE, I'LL HAVE MY REVENGE TONIGHT! I'LL PAY HER A LITTLE VISIT, AND IF SHE TREATS ME BADLY, I'LL TELL HER THE TRUTH ABOUT HER PRECIOUS FATHER!


SUSAN ABERNATHY, FILLED WITH SOME STRANGE UNEASINESS, HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SLEEP! NOW, UNAWARE OF THE EYES THAT WATCH...
I WONDER WHAT TAKES DADDY AWAY SO MUCH, AND SO LATE AT NIGHT? HE NEVER TELLS ME ANYTHING — AND WHEN I ASK QUESTIONS, HE ONLY TREATS ME LIKE A NAUGHTY CHILD! I'M SO WORRIED!

THERE IS THE SULLEN CREAK OF A WINDOW, A RUSH OF DANK AIR, AND THEN...
OHH — W-WHO ARE Y-YOU? NO!
NOW, MISS SUSAN, YOU MUSTN'T BE AFRAID OF OLD DRUM! IT'S JUST A LITTLE TALK I WANT!

EEEEEEEEEEEEE— FATHER! HELP! AAAAAAAAA—

SNATCHING UP A HEAVY CANE, THE ONLY WEAPON AVAILABLE, THE DOCTOR ANSWERS HIS DAUGHTER'S FRANTIC SCREAMS...

AEEEEEEE— DON'T TOUCH ME!

GREAT SCOTT— WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED?

I'M COMING, SUSAN!

YOU! YOU, DRUM! YOU FILTHY GUTTER SWINE! HOW DARE YOU—

DADDY! OH— H-HE WAS GOING TO HURT ME!

SHE LIES! I MEANT NO HARM, DOCTOR! I SWEAR IT! I WAS ONLY—

MIND THAT YOU DON'T STRIKE ME! I'LL TELL EVERY—

YOU'LL TELL NOTHING, YOU FIEND! I'LL BEAT YOUR EVIL CARCASS TO AN INCH OF ITS LIFE! HERE SEE HOW YOU LIKE THIS!

AGG— NO! STOP! HELP! YOU'RE KILLING— AAAAA—

I'LL NOT STOOP TO KILL THE LIKES OF YOU, DRUM, BUT I'LL GIVE YOU A LESSON YOU WON'T FORGET IN A HURRY! HERE'S MORE — AND ANOTHER ONE — AND ANOTHER!

WHEN THE DREADFUL BEATING IS OVER, THE DOCTOR HURLS THE CRINGING MAN INTO THE STINKING MIRE OF THE ALLEY...

YAAAA— DON'T HIT ME AGAIN! I'LL GO ----

OUT WITH YOU, PIG! FOR ALL YOUR SIZE AND UGLINESS, YOU'RE A PITIFUL COWARD!

ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR, YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN WITH ME! BUT I'LL HAVE REVENGE, NEVER FEAR! MY WORD IS NOTHING AGAINST YOURS, AND YOU COULD HAVE ME HANGED RIGHT ENOUGH, BUT THERE ARE OTHER WAYS! ONE OF THESE DAYS, MY FINE GENTLEMAN, YOU'LL RUE THE DAY YOU TOOK A STICK TO OLD DRUM!

WHILE THE DOCTOR, UNAWARE THAT A DARK AND BLOODY FATE ALREADY STALKS HIM, COMFORTS THE HYSTERICAL SUSAN...

OH, DADDY, IT WAS TERRIBLE! HE — HE CAME AT ME, AND—

THERE- THERE! IT'S ALL OVER NOW! BUT JUST THE SAME I THINK WE'LL SEND YOU TO YOUR AUNT AGATHA IN LONDON! YOU CAN REST, DEAR, AND FORGET THIS HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE!

SO THE NEXT AFTERNOON...
INBURGH—LC
MUST I GO TO AUNT AGATHA, DADDY? I WOULD MUCH RATHER STAY AND LOOK AFTER YOU! PLEASE?
NONSENSE! I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF, MY DEAR. NOW OFF YOU GO FOR A NICE LONG VISIT IN LONDON! GIVE YOUR AUNT MY LOVE, AND DON'T FORGET TO WRITE AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN!
IT'S REALLY JUST AS WELL THAT SUSAN HAS GONE! I NEED ABSOLUTE PRIVACY FOR MY NEW EXPERIMENTS— AND I DON'T TRUST THAT RUFFIAN, DRUM! BUT WITH SUSAN OUT OF THE WAY, THERE'S LITTLE ENOUGH TO FEAR!
HMMM— A FINE SPECIMEN! DRUM WAS RIGHT ABOUT THAT, AT LEAST! RATHER A PITY TO LOSE THE SERVICES OF THE ROGUE— HE HAD SUCH A KNACK OF FINDING BODIES WHEN NOBODY ELSE COULD! BUT I SUPPOSE I SHALL GET BY!
BUT FOR ONCE THE DOCTOR IS WRONG— TIME PASSES AND BODIES ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND...
THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! I MUST DO SOMETHING, AND SOON, OR ALL MY WORK WILL BE FOR NOTHING! TWO WEEKS NOW AND I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE A SINGLE BODY!
I'LL JUST HAVE TO CALL ON THAT ROGUE, DRUM AGAIN! HE CAN FIND ME A BODY, I'LL WAGER, AND PERHAPS BY THIS TIME HE HAS LEARNED HIS PLACE! IF NOT, I'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER LESSON— WITH THIS PISTOL!
SO THE DOCTOR SETS OUT TO FIND THE MAN WHO, EVEN THEN, IS SCHEMING FOR REVENGE...
YOU CERTAIN YOU WANT TO GO TO THE DEVIL'S TAVERN, SIR? IT'S NO PLACE FOR A GENTLEMAN!
YES— THE DEVIL'S TAVERN! — AND HURRY!

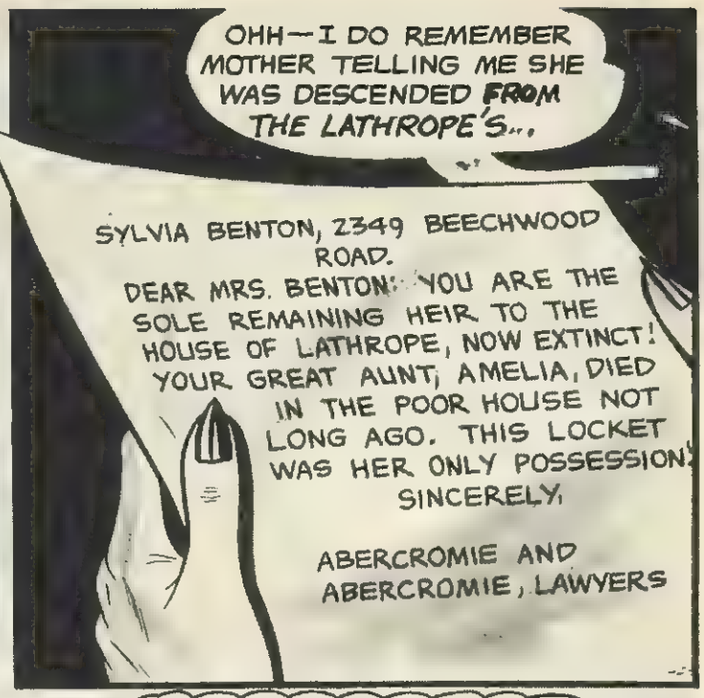
SOON THE DOCTOR FINDS HIMSELF IN THE STEWS OF EDINBURGH, WHERE HUMAN RATS COME OUT ONLY AT NIGHT AND MURDER LEERS FROM EVERY DOOR...
UGH — THE SPOT IS WELL NAMED! THOUGH I DOUBT THAT THE DEVIL WOULD HAVE THE RABBLE THAT LIVE HERE! NOW IF ONLY DRUM IS AT HOME!
DEVIL'S TAVERN
RAP RAP
SURE ENOUGH...
WHO KNOCKS AT THIS HOUR? OH, 'TIS YOU, SIR! WELL, WELL, COME FOR ME AGAIN AT LAST, SIR? I KNEW YOU WOULD, DOCTOR!
YES, YOU SCUM, I NEED YOU! BUT REMEMBER MY PROMISE— ONE FALSE MOVE AND YOU HANG!
A BARGAIN IS QUICKLY MADE...
WELL, FOOL, CAN YOU HELP ME? I MUST HAVE A BODY AT ONCE! NOW— TONIGHT!
THAT'S A BIG ORDER, SIR, BUT MAYBE OLD DRUM CAN OBLIGE THE DOCTOR! I'D BE MIGHTY PLEASED
ALL RIGHT, ONLY STOP FAWNING LIKE A WHIPPED DOG! WE'LL FORGET THE PAST! NOW TAKE THIS GOLD AND LET'S BE ON OUR WAY!
RIGHT AWAY, SIR! AND THANK YOU, SIR, THANK YOU FOR NOT HOLDING A GRUDGE AGAINST OLD DRUM!
A STORM BREAKS AS DRUM LASHES THE HORSES INTO A FURIOUS PACE...
AFRAID WE'RE GOING TO GET A BIT OF A SOAKING, SIR! BUT THE STORM WILL MAKE IT SAFER—FOR OUR SORT OF WORK!
NEVER MIND THE STORM! I MUST HAVE THAT BODY TONIGHT!
GO EASY, YOU FOOL, OR YOU'LL LAME THE HORSES!
WE'RE HERE AT LAST, DOCTOR! YES, NOW YOU'LL HAVE YOUR CORPSE, SIR!
HERE IT IS! THIS GRAVE IS THE ONE YOU WANT! JUST A MINUTE OR TWO AND WE'LL HAVE YOUR PRECIOUS CADAVER!
CALM YOURSELF, MAN! WHAT'S COME OVER YOU? WE'VE ROBBED GRAVES BEFORE TONIGHT!

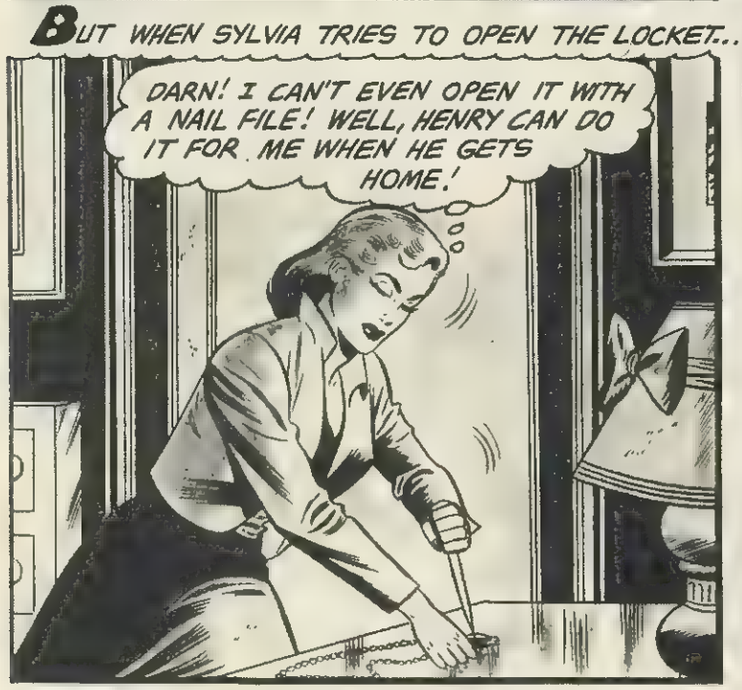
FINALLY, DRUM HAULS A NEW MADE COFFIN OUT OF THE GRAVE...
THERE SHE IS, DOCTOR! YOUR CORPSE! NOW LOOK YOUR FILL, MY FINE GENTLEMAN! HAH-HAH— YES, LOOK INTO THE COFFIN!
MIND YOUR TONE, DRUM! AND ENOUGH OF THIS NONSENSE— TAKE OFF THE LID!
THERE, DOCTOR ABERNATHY! LIKE HER?
A YOUNG GIRL, EH? FAIR ENOUGH! B-BUT WAIT A MINUTE— NO!
SUSAN! NO— DON'T LET IT BE! AAAAAA—
BEAT ME LIKE A DOG, EH, DOCTOR? WASN'T FIT TO WIPE YOUR MUDDY FEET ON, WAS I? HAH-HAH— WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY REVENGE NOW? I KILLED HER AND WAITED— KNOWING YOU'D COME TO OLD DRUM SOONER OR LATER!
YOU DEVIL! YOU MURDERING FIEND! YOU'RE MAD— STARK RAVING MAD!
THE DOCTOR'S PISTOL FLARES LIKE A ROCKET IN THE NIGHT...
HUH! A PISTOL— YIIIIIIIIIIIIII—
AND THERE'S AN END TO YOU, DRUM! YOU'LL NEVER MURDER AGAIN—OR ROB ANOTHER GRAVE! AND NEITHER WILL I!
I SINNED, SUSAN, DEAR, AND YOU HAD TO PAY! AND NOW MY LIFE IS OVER, TOO— THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME ON THIS EARTH! BE PATIENT, MY DAUGHTER! I'LL BE WITH YOU IN VERY LITTLE TIME!
WHEN THEY FOUND THEM NEXT MORNING, DOCTOR JOHN ABERNATHY LAY WITH HIS ARMS AROUND THE DEAD GIRL... BOTH A TENDER AND GRISLY SIGHT! THEY WERE BURIED IN THAT SAME CHURCHYARD, NOT FAR APART, WHILE THE BODY OF DRUM WAS TARRED AND HUNG ON A GIBBET FOR ALL TO SEE...
THE END

WITCH'S BRAND

THE BENTONS WERE A TYPICAL YOUNG COUPLE, VERY MUCH IN LOVE — AT LEAST UNTIL THE LOCKET ARRIVED FROM ENGLAND! THEN A SINISTER CHANGE CAME OVER SYLVIA BENTON, AND ON HER ONCE LOVELY THROAT THERE BLOSSOMED **THE CRIME FLOWER**

MAYBE NOT, SYLVIA, BUT SOMEBODY KNOWS YOU...
W—WHY, IT'S A LOCKET! A BEAUTIFUL LOCKET! AND THERE'S A NOTE WITH IT!


OHH—I DO REMEMBER MOTHER TELLING ME SHE WAS DESCENDED FROM THE LATHROPE'S...
SYLVIA BENTON, 2349 BEECHWOOD ROAD.
DEAR MRS. BENTON: YOU ARE THE SOLE REMAINING HEIR TO THE HOUSE OF LATHROPE, NOW EXTINCT! YOUR GREAT AUNT, AMELIA, DIED IN THE POOR HOUSE NOT LONG AGO. THIS LOCKET WAS HER ONLY POSSESSION!
SINCERELY,
ABERCROMIE AND ABERCROMIE, LAWYERS


BUT WHEN SYLVIA TRIES TO OPEN THE LOCKET...
DARN! I CAN'T EVEN OPEN IT WITH A NAIL FILE! WELL, HENRY CAN DO IT FOR ME WHEN HE GETS HOME!

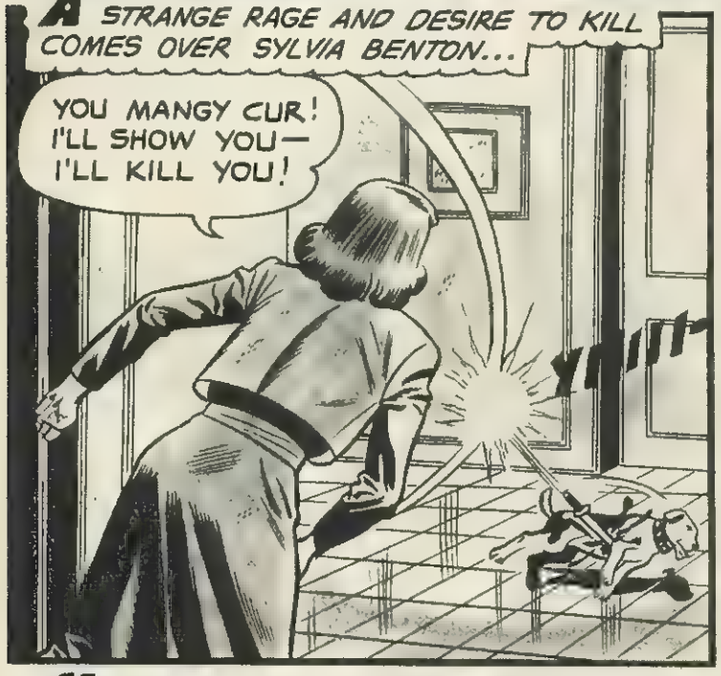
I'LL SURPRISE HIM! I WON'T MENTION THE LOCKET AT ALL AND JUST SEE IF HE NOTICES IT!

SUDDENLY SYLVIA FEELS AS THOUGH A WHITE-HOT IRON HAS BEEN THRUST AGAINST HER THROAT...
OHHH—MY THROAT! BURNING—HOT!
EEEEEEE-

AND WHERE THE LOCKET HAS TOUCHED HER THROAT, THERE BLOOMS A STRANGE RED SCAR...
OHHHH—UUUUOOOO—FEEL SO FUNNY! S-SOMETHING IS HAPPENING TO ME!

MINUTES LATER AS SYLVIA GROPES BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS...
SO F-FUNNY! I NEVER FAINTED BEFORE! AND I FEEL LIKE A DIFFERENT PERSON! ALMOST AS— AS THOUGH I HAD DIED AND BEEN BORN AGAIN!

MAYBE SYLVIA IS A NEW PERSON! AT LEAST BONZO DOESN'T SEEM TO KNOW HIS MISTRESS...
BONZO! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? DON'T YOU DARE GROWL AT ME!
GRR-RR+!


A STRANGE RAGE AND DESIRE TO KILL COMES OVER SYLVIA BENTON...
YOU MANGY CUR! I'LL SHOW YOU— I'LL KILL YOU!

I DID IT! I KILLED BONZO! HAH-HAH-HAH— I SUPPOSE I SHOULD FEEL SORRY— BUT I DON'T! I FEEL GOOD!

MOMENTS LATER...
I AM CHANGED SOMEHOW! I FEEL FREE— POWERFUL! AND ALL OF A SUDDEN I HATE HENRY! WHY DID I EVER MARRY A SNIVELING FOOL LIKE HIM?

I'LL GET RID OF HIM, TOO! THE FIRST CHANCE I GET! BUT I'LL BE CAREFUL— VERY CAREFUL!
CRASH!

SO THAT EVENING THE UNSUSPECTING HENRY BENTON COMES HOME FROM WORK...

HELLO, DARLING! WHEWWWW— WHAT A TOUGH DAY AT THE OFFICE!

HELLO, HENRY! I'VE FIXED A NICE DINNER!

IT'S TRUE! I DO HATE HIM NOW! THE SIGHT OF HIM MAKES ME SICK!

HEY — SOMETHING NEW? WAS THIS WHAT THE MAILMAN BROUGHT THIS MORNING?

NO! DON'T TOUCH IT, HENRY! YOU MUSTN'T!

I — I HAVEN'T GOTTEN USED TO IT YET! AND I'M NERVOUS TONIGHT, DARLING! YOU UNDERSTAND?

S—SURE, DARLING! I DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU!

HE MUSTN'T SEE THE SCAR! THE LOCKET MADE!

I'LL GET DINNER READY NOW!

OKAY, SYLVIA!

HMMM — SHE IS ACTING STRANGELY TONIGHT! DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS!

AND IN THE KITCHEN...

THAT WAS CLOSE! IF HE SEES THE SCAR, HE'LL ASK QUESTIONS—MAYBE EVEN TAKE THE LOCKET AWAY FROM ME! THEN I MIGHT BECOME THE WAY I WAS BEFORE!

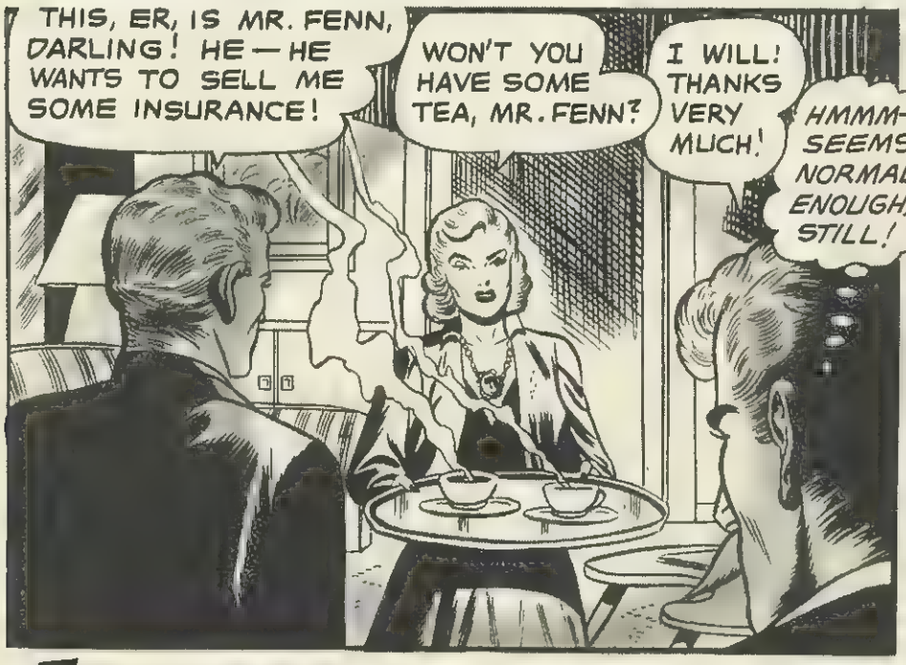
I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND WHY—BUT I KNOW THE LOCKET MAKES ME FEEL GOOD! I'LL NEVER PART WITH IT! SO TONIGHT HENRY WILL GET A LITTLE SURPRISE!

POISON

A MINUTE LATER THE DOORBELL RINGS, AND...
YES?
GOOD EVENING! MY NAME IS FENN, CHRISTOPHER FENN, AND MY BUSINESS IS MOST URGENT! I HAVE FLOWN ALL THE WAY FROM ENGLAND!
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MR. FENN! MY WIFE DID RECEIVE A LOCKET TODAY, BUT...
YOU WILL, SIR, YOU WILL! I ONLY HOPE I AM NOT TOO LATE! THOSE FOOLS BACK IN ENGLAND, THOSE LAWYERS, MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE...
MY SPECIALTY IS PSYCHIC RESEARCH, SIR! THE SUPER-NATURAL! AND THAT LOCKET SENT YOUR WIFE WAS WORN BY A WOMAN WHO WAS EXECUTED IN FRANCE THREE-HUNDRED YEARS AGO — FOR WITCHCRAFT!
WITCHCRAFT? ARE YOU CRAZY?
SYLVIA LISTENS TO THE STRANGE CONVERSATION — AND BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND...
THE LATHROPES WERE ORIGINALLY FRENCH! ONE OF THEM, A DUCHESS, WAS BURNED AT THE STAKE! FIRST SHE WAS BRANDED WITH THE FLEUR DE-LIS — ON THE THROAT! AND BEFORE SHE DIED, SHE CURSED A LOCKET AND GAVE IT TO A FRIEND! YOUR WIFE...
YOU MEAN SHE HAS THAT LOCKET?
YES! IT WAS TO BE GIVEN TO ME FOR STUDY! I WOULD HAVE DESTROYED IT! BUT THE LAWYERS MADE A MISTAKE!
THIS IS FANTASTIC! PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE IN CURSES ANY MORE!
I KNOW THE LOCKET'S HISTORY! EVERY WOMAN WHO HAS WORN IT HAS BECOME A WITCH! THEY SEEM TO INHERIT AN EVIL POWER! BUT FIRST THE LOCKET SCARS THEM, BURNS A FLEUR DE LIS ON THE THROAT! IF YOUR WIFE IS NOT SCARRED, THERE IS STILL A CHANCE...

BUT SYLVIA HAS OVERHEARD EVERYTHING! NOW...
SO THAT'S IT! MY ANCESTOR WAS A WITCH—AND NOW SO AM I! GOOD! I CAN FEEL THE POWER IN ME — THE URGE TO KILL! I'LL BEGIN WITH THEM!

HERE COMES MY WIFE NOW! NOT A WORD OF THIS YET!
I AGREE! FIRST WE MUST SEE IF SHE HAS THE SCAR! THAT IS UP TO YOU!


THIS, ER, IS MR. FENN, DARLING! HE—HE WANTS TO SELL ME SOME INSURANCE!
WON'T YOU HAVE SOME TEA, MR. FENN?
I WILL! THANKS VERY MUCH!
HMMM—SEEMS NORMAL ENOUGH, STILL!

SYLVIA SEEMS OKAY! BUT SHE DID ACT VERY FUNNY ABOUT THE LOCKET EARLIER! I'VE GOT TO FIGURE A WAY—HMMMM—TEA TASTES FUNNY!

THE POISON STRIKES...
OHHH—GHHHHHH—MY STOMACH! BURNING UP! Y—YOU—
YES—YES, YOU FOOL! RAT POISON! YOU'RE DYING! YOU'LL NEVER DESTROY ME NOW!

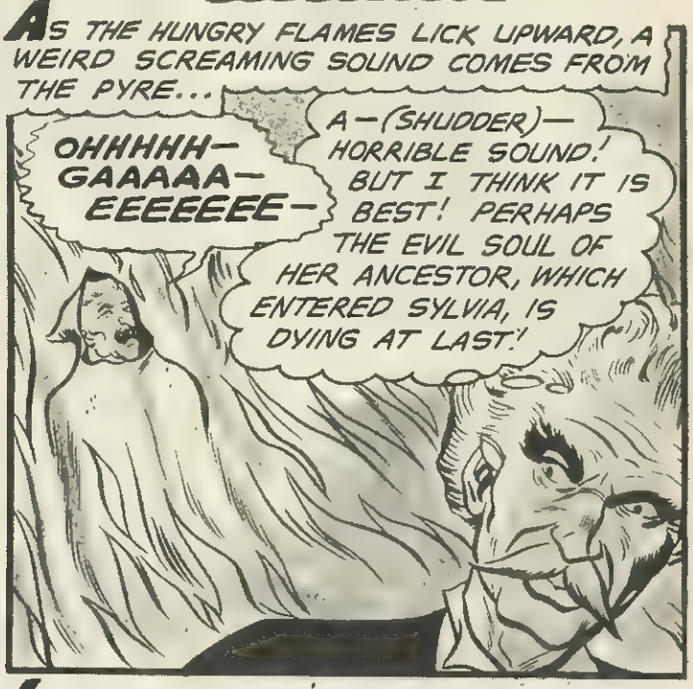
SEE IT? THE SCAR! I'M BRANDED JUST AS SHE WAS—BUT SHE'S COME BACK, IN ME! I'M A WITCH!
NO—Oooo—DYING!

BUT EVEN A WITCH'S PLAN CAN GO WRONG...
AS FOR THIS FOOL— HUH? Y—YOU'RE NOT DEAD!
NO! FORTUNATELY I SPILLED SOME OF MINE! I AM VERY SICK— BUT STRONG ENOUGH TO DO MY JOB!
W—WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOUR JOB?
YOU ARE AN EVIL THING, SYLVIA! YOU MUST BE DESTROYED AT ONCE!
FIRST I MUST HAVE THE LOCKET!
NO! KEEP AWAY! YOU'LL NEVER GET THE LOCKET— NEVER!
OUT OF THE MURK OF CENTURIES COMES A REMEMBERED EVIL TO AID SYLVIA...
SHE'S CHANGING INTO A SNAKE! BUT I CAN'T LET HER GET AWAY— SHE MUST BE DESTROYED!
BUT FENN IS A BRAVE AND DETERMINED MAN...
HISSSS-SSS-
IF I CAN JUST HOLD ON SHE'LL HAVE TO REVERT TO HER HUMAN FORM! SHE HAS ONLY JUST BECOME A WITCH—
SUDDENLY...
LET ME GO, CURSE YOU— I CURSE YOU FOREVER! I'LL KILL YOU AND LET YOUR BONES ROT...
SO YOU'RE BACK AGAIN, SYLVIA! GOOD! NOW YOU MUST BE DESTROYED!

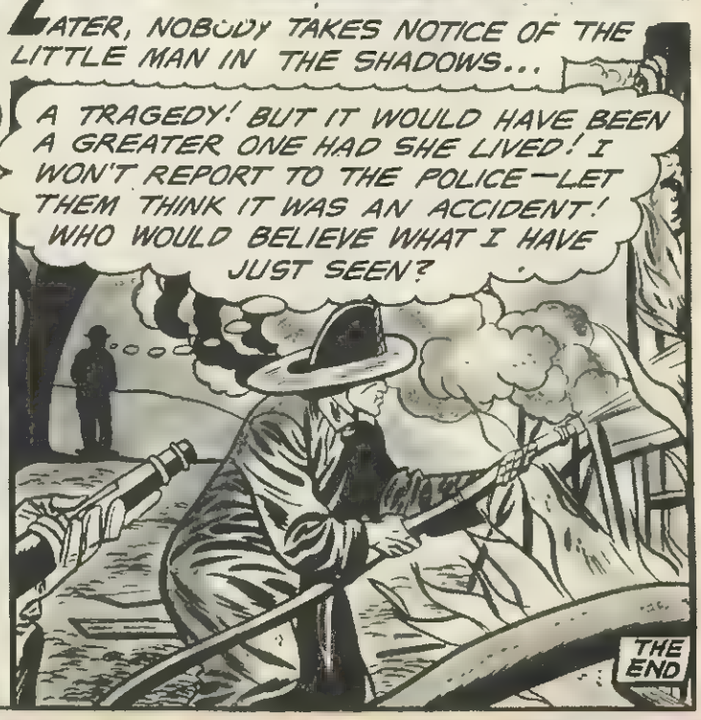
BUT THE WITCH IS NOT YET DEAD..
G—GONE! CHANGED TO A CAT! SHE'LL GET AWAY!

DESPERATELY, FENN HURLS A CHAIR AT THE BLACK BEAST...
GOT TO GET HER! ONLY CHANCE—THIS CHAIR! IF SHE GETS AWAY!
RRRRR—YOOWWW—
HASTILY FENN FINDS SOME GASOLINE! IN THE LIVING ROOM HE ARRANGES A STRANGE PYRE...

HEAVEN FORGIVE ME FOR THIS, BUT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY! SHE MUST DIE IN THE FIRE! GOODBYE, MY POOR SYLVIA! FORTUNE WAS CRUEL TO YOU!


AS THE HUNGRY FLAMES LICK UPWARD, A WEIRD SCREAMING SOUND COMES FROM THE PYRE...
OHHHHH—GAAAAA—EEEEEEE—
A—(SHUDDER)—HORRIBLE SOUND! BUT I THINK IT IS BEST! PERHAPS THE EVIL SOUL OF HER ANCESTOR, WHICH ENTERED SYLVIA, IS DYING AT LAST!

AAAAAAAA—
YES—SHE IS BEING DESTROYED AT LAST! AND THE LOCKET MUST GO ALSO! THERE—AN END TO IT!


LATER, NOBODY TAKES NOTICE OF THE LITTLE MAN IN THE SHADOWS...
A TRAGEDY! BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A GREATER ONE HAD SHE LIVED! I WON'T REPORT TO THE POLICE—LET THEM THINK IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! WHO WOULD BELIEVE WHAT I HAVE JUST SEEN?
THE END

Your Coffin is Waiting, Sir!

I SAID I'D GET YOU!

EEEEY!!!!!!—

MURDER HAS MANY FACES! IT STALKS UNSUSPECTED IN THE BRIGHT SUN OF DAY, SMILING AT THE VICTIM! IT LURKS IN THE BLACK DEPTHS OF NIGHT, WAITING WITH SLIMY CLAWS! IT CAN BE CRUDE AND IT CAN BE SUBTLE! THIS IS THE STORY OF TWO MEN, BOTH MURDERERS IN THEIR OWN WAY, AND BOTH SAFE FROM THE LAW! FROM THE LAW— BUT NOT FROM THE VOICE OF THEIR OWN BLACK SOULS! FOR MURDER CORRUPTS AND KILLS THOSE WHO PRACTICE IT! WHEN MURDER SPEAKS, IT SAYS: **I'LL GET YOU...**

SHE WAS ONLY AN UNDERTAKER'S DAUGHTER, BUT KAY FOXX WAS LOVELY AND AMBITIOUS...

WHY DOES THAT FOOL ALWAYS HONK FOR YOU? CAN'T HE COME IN LIKE A DECENT MAN? ANYWAY I DON'T LIKE...

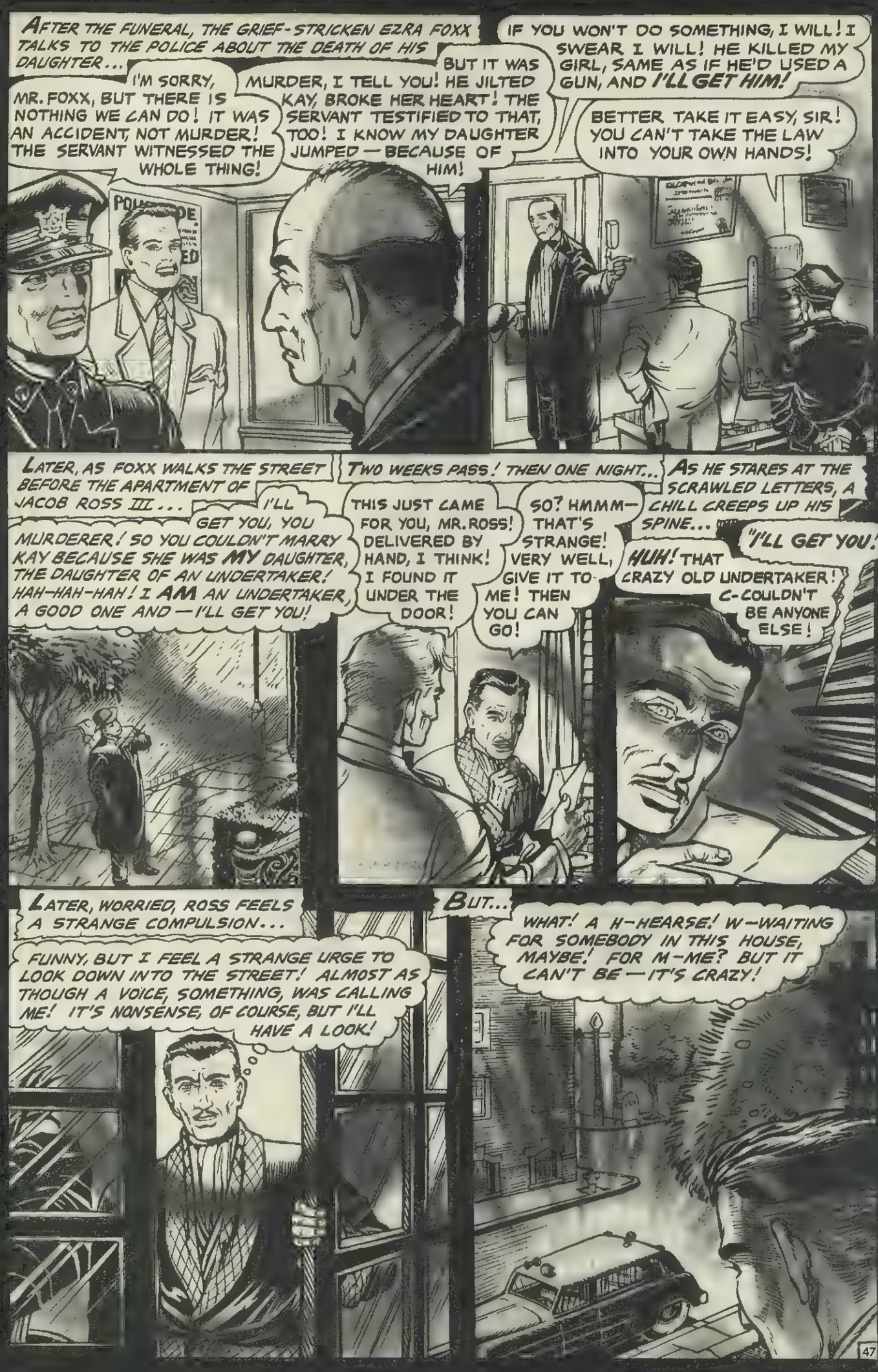
PLEASE, DAD! NOT AGAIN! YOU DON'T LIKE JAKE BECAUSE HE'S RICH! HE'S **SOMEBODY!**

I LOVE JAKE! I— I'M GOING TO MARRY HIM IF I CAN! IF HE'LL HAVE THE DAUGHTER OF AN **UNDERTAKER!**

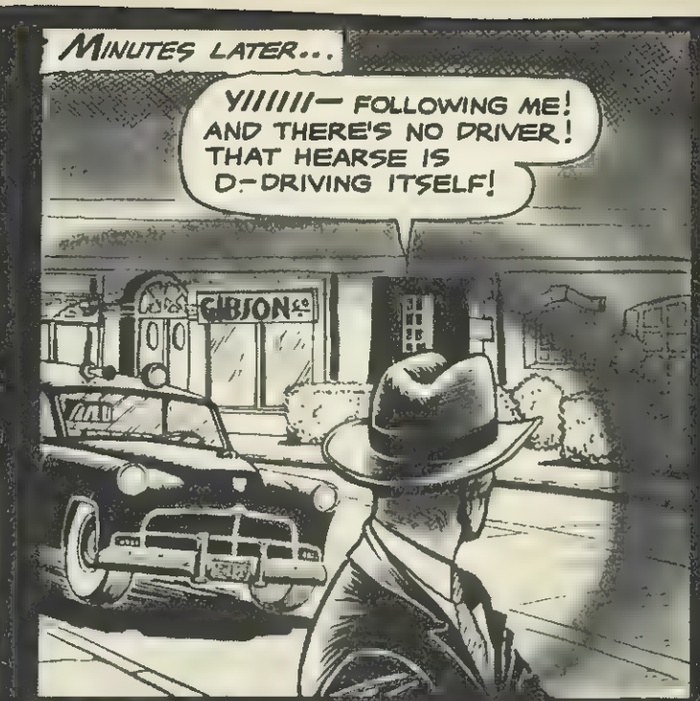
SO THAT'S IT! YOU'RE **ASHAMED** OF ME! KAY, PLEASE LISTEN...

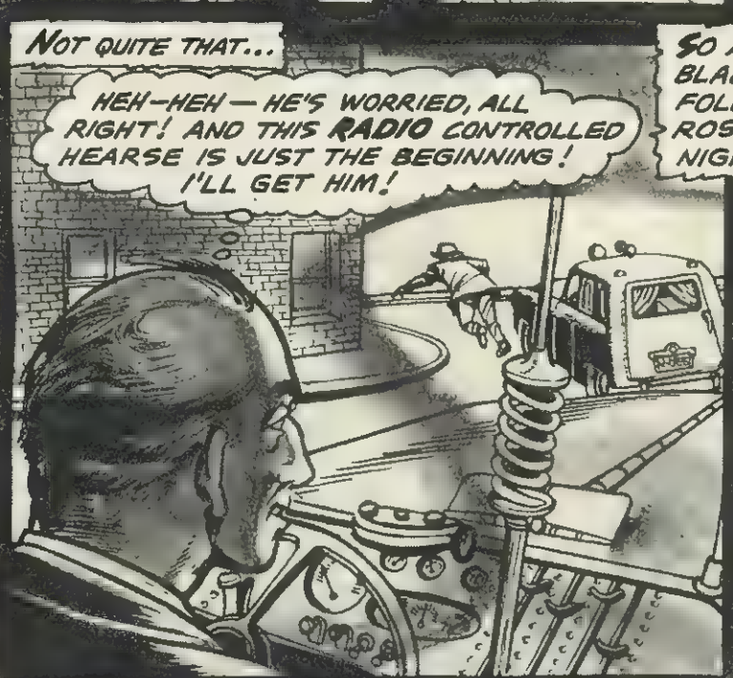
HONK HONK

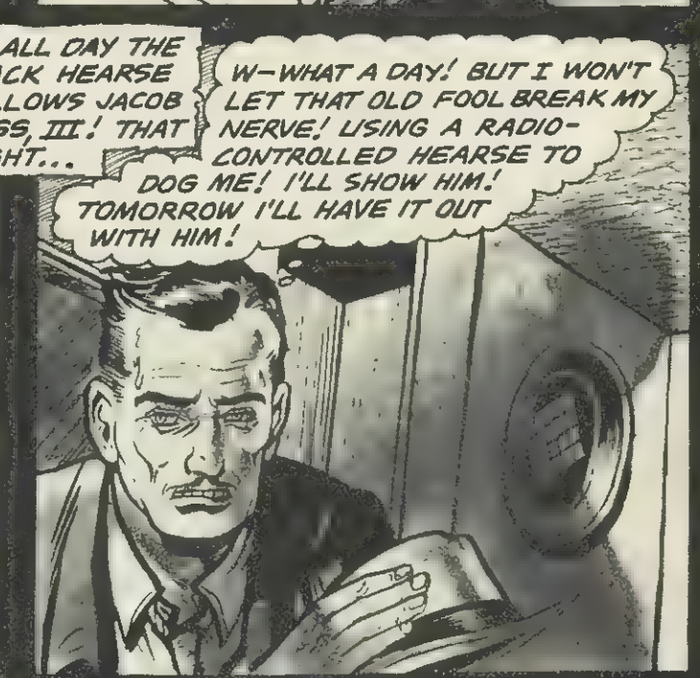
LATER, AT THE PENTHOUSE OF JACOB ROSS III, WEALTHY PLAYBOY AND MAN ABOUT TOWN...
WHAT'S THE MATTER TONIGHT, JAKE? YOU'RE SO QUIET! JUST BECAUSE DAD DOESN'T LIKE YOU...
IT'S NOT THAT, KAY! IT'S —WELL, I MUST TELL YOU SOMETHING!
THE TRUTH IS, KAY— OUR LITTLE AFFAIR IS OVER! I DON'T WANT TO BE UNKIND, BUT THAT'S IT! I'M MARRYING CARLOTTA MUNSON NEXT MONTH!
OH!
NO! YOU CAN'T, JAKE! I LOVE YOU! Y-YOU SAID WE WOULD BE MARRIED! OH, DARLING, YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!
PLEASE, KAY! I DETEST SCENES! BE REALISTIC! AFTER ALL, I CAN HARDLY MARRY THE DAUGHTER OF, WELL, YOU MUST SEE HOW IT IS! MAYBE YOU'D BETTER LEAVE NOW!
MR. ROSS, SIR! THAT RAILING! I MEANT TO TELL YOU — THE BUILDING INSPECTOR WAS HERE, AND...
WHAT? STOP MUMBLING, BILLINGS! WHAT ABOUT THE RAILING?
SOB— SOB—
BUT THE SERVANT NEVER HAS A CHANCE TO FINISH! SUDDENLY..
KAY! OH MY HEAVENS!
I—OHHHHHHHH— HELP...
CRAC-C-K
EEEEEEY!!!!!!!!!!!—


AFTER THE FUNERAL, THE GRIEF-STRICKEN EZRA FOXX TALKS TO THE POLICE ABOUT THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER...
I'M SORRY, MR. FOXX, BUT THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, NOT MURDER! THE SERVANT WITNESSED THE WHOLE THING!
BUT IT WAS MURDER, I TELL YOU! HE JILTED KAY, BROKE HER HEART! THE SERVANT TESTIFIED TO THAT, TOO! I KNOW MY DAUGHTER JUMPED — BECAUSE OF HIM!
IF YOU WON'T DO SOMETHING, I WILL! I SWEAR I WILL! HE KILLED MY GIRL, SAME AS IF HE'D USED A GUN, AND I'LL GET HIM!
BETTER TAKE IT EASY, SIR! YOU CAN'T TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS!
LATER, AS FOXX WALKS THE STREET BEFORE THE APARTMENT OF JACOB ROSS III...
I'LL GET YOU, YOU MURDERER! SO YOU COULDN'T MARRY KAY BECAUSE SHE WAS MY DAUGHTER, THE DAUGHTER OF AN UNDERTAKER! HAH-HAH-HAH! I AM AN UNDERTAKER, A GOOD ONE AND — I'LL GET YOU!
TWO WEEKS PASS! THEN ONE NIGHT...
THIS JUST CAME FOR YOU, MR. ROSS! DELIVERED BY HAND, I THINK! I FOUND IT UNDER THE DOOR!
SO? HMMM— THAT'S STRANGE! VERY WELL, GIVE IT TO ME! THEN YOU CAN GO!
AS HE STARES AT THE SCRAWLED LETTERS, A CHILL CREEPS UP HIS SPINE...
"I'LL GET YOU!"
HUH! THAT CRAZY OLD UNDERTAKER! C-COULDN'T BE ANYONE ELSE!
LATER, WORRIED, ROSS FEELS A STRANGE COMPULSION...
FUNNY, BUT I FEEL A STRANGE URGE TO LOOK DOWN INTO THE STREET! ALMOST AS THOUGH A VOICE, SOMETHING, WAS CALLING ME! IT'S NONSENSE, OF COURSE, BUT I'LL HAVE A LOOK!
BUT...
WHAT! A H-HEARSE! W-WAITING FOR SOMEBODY IN THIS HOUSE, MAYBE! FOR M-ME? BUT IT CAN'T BE — IT'S CRAZY!

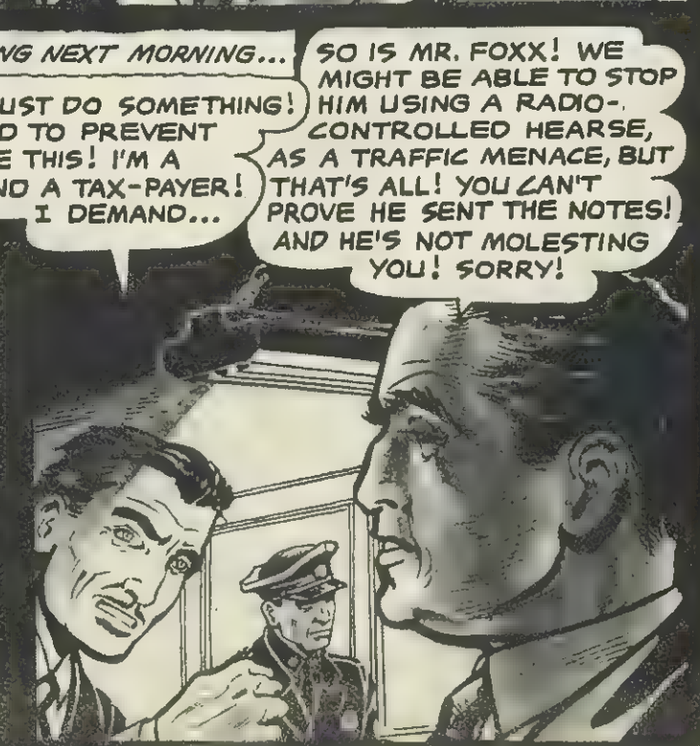
AND THE NEXT MORNING...
H-HUH! IT'S STILL THERE! MUST HAVE BEEN THERE ALL NIGHT WAITING FOR— SOMEONE!


MINUTES LATER...
Y!!!!!!— FOLLOWING ME! AND THERE'S NO DRIVER! THAT HEARSE IS D-DRIVING ITSELF!
GIBSON


NOT QUITE THAT...
HEH-HEH — HE'S WORRIED, ALL RIGHT! AND THIS RADIO CONTROLLED HEARSE IS JUST THE BEGINNING! I'LL GET HIM!


SO ALL DAY THE BLACK HEARSE FOLLOWS JACOB ROSS, III! THAT NIGHT...
W-WHAT A DAY! BUT I WON'T LET THAT OLD FOOL BREAK MY NERVE! USING A RADIO-CONTROLLED HEARSE TO DOG ME! I'LL SHOW HIM! TOMORROW I'LL HAVE IT OUT WITH HIM!

BUT AS HE REACHES FOR A CIGAR TO CALM HIS NERVES...
Y!!!!!!!!!!—
I'll Get You!


FIRST THING NEXT MORNING...
BUT YOU MUST DO SOMETHING! YOU'RE PAID TO PREVENT THINGS LIKE THIS! I'M A CITIZEN AND A TAX-PAYER! I DEMAND...
SO IS MR. FOXX! WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO STOP HIM USING A RADIO-CONTROLLED HEARSE, AS A TRAFFIC MENACE, BUT THAT'S ALL! YOU CAN'T PROVE HE SENT THE NOTES! AND HE'S NOT MOLESTING YOU! SORRY!

SO TWO MORE WEEKS PASS! JACOB ROSS, III, HIS NERVES HUMMING DANGEROUSLY, TRIES TO STICK IT OUT...
WHAT IS THIS, ROSS? SOME SORT OF A GAG? EVERY TIME I SEE YOU, I SEE THAT HEARSE! SEEMS
FOLLOWING ME? OF COURSE NOT! JUST A COINCIDENCE, I SUPPOSE! WHY WOULD A HEARSE FOLLOW ME?
WHY INDEED?
JAKE! I FEEL SO F-FUNNY! THAT HEARSE BACK THERE— IT'S BEEN FOLLOWING US FOR HOURS NOW!
HAH-HAH! WHAT AN IMAGINATION YOU'VE GOT, SUSAN! WHY WOULD A HEARSE FOLLOW A PRETTY GIRL? FORGET IT!
ONE NIGHT A PHONE CALL COMES...
I'LL GET YOU!
YAAAAAA— I C-CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER!
HURRY, BILLINGS, YOU FOOL! IF ONLY THEY DON'T CANCEL THAT FLIGHT BECAUSE OF THE STORM! I MUST GET AWAY— NOW— TONIGHT! HURRY UP!
YES, MR. ROSS! BUT IT'S A NASTY NIGHT TO FLY, SIR! DANGEROUS!
MINUTES LATER...
TAXI! TAXI!
I'M IN LUCK! FOR ONCE THAT CURSED HEARSE ISN'T WAITING FOR ME!
TO THE AIRPORT, AND HURRY! AND KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR A BLACK HEARSE!
HUH? DID YOU SAY HEARSE, MISTER? YOU EXPECTING TO DIE, MAYBE?
STILL NO SIGN OF THE HEARSE, THANK GOODNESS! MAYBE I'VE REALLY SHAKEN IT AT LAST! HAH-HAH! I'LL GO TO MEXICO CITY, HAVE A NICE REST, GET MY NERVES BACK IN SHAPE!

CONTINUED ON BACK COVER

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SO AS THE HEARSE GLIDES AWAY...
HUH! A C-COFFIN! TRYING TO SCARE ME AGAIN! A TRICK TO DRIVE ME CRAZY, BUT IT WON'T WORK! I'M N-NOT AFRAID!
A TERRIBLE URGE GRIPS HIM...
I'M CRAZY TO DO THIS, BUT I MUST! BUT IT CAN'T BE! HE WOULDN'T— HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN CARRYING HER B-BODY AROUND ALL THIS T-TIME! BUT I'VE GOT TO KNOW!
GAAAAAAAA— IT IS! IT'S KAY!
AS IF HIS CRAZED SCREAM WERE A SIGNAL, THE HEARSE STOPS...
YAAAEEEEEEE— THE DOORS—LOCKED LET ME OUT—LET ME OUT!
HEE-HEE-HEE! DON'T LIKE HER COMPANY, EH? HAH-HAH! SHE'S BEEN FOLLOWING YOU ALL THE TIME— YOU MURDERER! I BURIED A DUMMY IN HER PLACE! HO-HO-HO!
HEE-HEE-HEE! IT WON'T BE VERY LONG NOW, MURDERER! HAH-HAH-HAH— I SAID I GET YOU!
WHERE ARE WE? WHY HAVE YOU STOPPED? W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I'M NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING! HAH-HAH! I'LL LET THE TRAIN DO IT! AND I'M NOT AFRAID OF THE POLICE BECAUSE I'LL BE DEAD, TOO! HO-HO-HO-HO...
TRAIN? DEAD! AHHHHHH—
AND THE WHISTLE MOANS...
EEEEEEE—
WOO-I'LL GET YOU-OOO WHO-OOO
GAAAAA—
THE END